

Common Core Revolt/China's Debt By Rana Foroohar / Silicon Beach

TIME

IT'S SOLD
OPENLY IN
STORES,
POPULAR WITH
KIDS AND
UNPREDICTABLY
DANGEROUS

THE
RISE OF
FAKE
POT

BY ELIZA GRAY



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seized by
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TIME

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Photograph by Jamie Chung for TIME

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Conversation

What You Said About ...



ELECTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN "Brave people with a lot at stake," wrote AlphaJuliette on TIME.com about the steadfast voters, many of them women, described by Krista Mahr in her April 14 cover story on violent Taliban efforts to disrupt elections.

Readers like Hannah Vissering of Marquette, Mich., feared continued abuses, citing myriad people "with the means to impede the noble aims of those who desire a modern democratic state." A war-weary Edward Monroe of Temecula, Calif., meanwhile, was struck by the contrast between a 2001 TIME cover on "The Last Days of the Taliban" and last week's: **"Does anything else depict the failure of the Western world more?"**

MENTAL HEALTH AND OBAMACARE Many readers objected to Joe Klein's suggestion that "if the Jones family believes it receives all the mental-health counseling it needs through its church, it shouldn't be required to pay for mental-health coverage." "No one can foresee which of our families will be impacted by serious mental illness, although we do know it will be at least 20% of them," wrote Elizabeth Hinds of Portland, Ore. Psychologist Jill Berger of Coconut Creek, Fla., added that clergy, while essential, **"are not sufficiently trained in evidence-based psychotherapy and can do more harm than good in some cases."**



MICROAGGRESSION John McWhorter's essay on microaggression—small, often unconscious acts of bigotry—spurred a lively, at times snarky debate on TIME.com. "Here, have a tissue. Problem solved," wrote finnhuckster. **"Anyone who is so easily offended needs to travel more; learn what real problems look like,"** commented JonDyson. "You missed that microaggression is not just about race," countered ssojourner. "It's also about gender, sexual orientation, being of 'unclear' heritage and more. In other words, anyone can unintentionally or intentionally be micro-aggressive by ignoring or challenging the humanity of the person in front of us and ignoring our own privilege (even if it's only in that moment)."

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Send a letter: **TIME Magazine Letters**, Time & Life Building, New York, NY 10020. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and home telephone and may be edited for purposes of clarity and space

An aerial view of the installation in northwestern Pakistan



NOW ON LIGHTBOX U.S. drone attacks have killed an estimated 900 civilians in Pakistan since 2004. To put a face on the destruction, a group of Pakistani artists worked with French street artist JR on an installation, above, in a field in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, featuring a banner-size image of a young Pakistani girl whose parents were allegedly killed in a drone strike. Its title? #NotABugSplat, a reference to U.S. military slang for casualties of drone attacks. Read more at lightbox.time.com.

NOW ON TIME.COM

In advance of TIME's annual TIME 100 list of the world's most influential people (curated by our editors), we're asking you to weigh in on who you think should make the cut. Choose from 150 artists, icons and leaders (including the six at right) at time.com/time100. We'll publish reader picks on April 23.

(1)
NARENDRA MODI
Indian politician

(2)
BEYONCÉ
Musician

(3)
BARACK OBAMA
U.S. President



(4)
MARY BARRA
GM CEO

(5)
SHINZO ABE
Japanese Prime Minister

(6)
MILEY CYRUS
Musician

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TECHNOLOGY

Briefing

101

Age in years of a message in a bottle found in Germany; it was given to the sender's granddaughter



FedEx

Tasked with transporting a valuable T. rex skeleton to the Smithsonian



GOOD WEEK

BAD WEEK



UPS

Criticized for threatening to fire 250 protesting workers

'I wake up every morning and you're the first people ... I pray for.'



OSCAR PISTORIUS, South African track star, apologizing to the family of former girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp; he's currently on trial for her murder

\$36 million

Amount a rare cup from the Ming dynasty fetched at auction in Hong Kong; it's the priciest piece of Chinese porcelain ever sold



'You get a freebie question for the ridiculousness of that question.'

RAHM EMANUEL, Chicago mayor, to a *New Republic* reporter who asked whether he wished he had been in D.C. to help manage the botched HealthCare.gov launch

'He was just stabbing everybody that was in his way.'

GRACEY EVANS, student at Franklin Regional Senior High School, where authorities said another student went on a stabbing spree, injuring at least 20 people

'We must prepare ourselves for possible further provocative acts.'



PARK GEUN-HYE, South Korean President, calling for heightened vigilance in relations with North Korea after several of its drones were suspected of flying south

75,000

Approximate weight, in pounds (34,000 kg), of the chicken nuggets recalled by Tyson Foods because of possible plastic contamination

'Don't paint your wife.'



GEORGE W. BUSH, former U.S. President, when asked what he has learned during his newfound brush with artistry

Briefing

LightBox

Neighbors Again

A woman stands in a "reconciliation village" in Mybo, Rwanda, on April 6, one of five such communities where those who served prison terms for the Rwandan genocide now live side by side with survivors. This month marks the 20th anniversary of the start of the atrocities there that claimed more than 800,000 lives.

Photograph by Chip Somodevilla—Getty Images

FOR PICTURES OF THE WEEK,
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World

Ukraine's Showdown With Russia Shifts to Its Eastern Border

History doesn't wait long to repeat itself. In the first week of April, pro-Russian separatists seized government buildings in eastern Ukraine, barricaded themselves inside and appealed to Russia to protect them. They are following the script that last month ended in Russia's annexation of Crimea. Only this time, the stakes are much higher.

Eastern Ukraine is several times larger, wealthier and better defended than Crimea. Moreover, Russia won't have the advantage of surprise. In late February, its occupation of Crimea exploited the chaotic power vacuum left by Ukraine's revolution. Now the new government in Kiev is ready for a fight. Thousands of troops have been moved to guard its eastern borders, and police have arrested scores of separatists in what they have termed a counterterrorism operation.

But that operation may simply give Russia an excuse to intervene, on the pretext of taking eastern Ukraine "under its protection," as it has threatened to do for months. On April 8, Moscow even claimed Kiev was sending American mercenaries to suppress unrest in the region, thus setting up a useful pretext for a possible invasion.

That would be enough to spark

a full-scale war with Ukraine, likely to last longer and be bloodier than Russia's 2008 incursion into Georgia. Worryingly for the government in Kiev, the carnage may be worth the prize to Russian President Vladimir Putin. It would mean seizing vast reserves of coal and metals, and the Russian public would likely support him. In early March, a national poll found 65% of Russians believe that eastern Ukraine is "in essence" Russia's territory.

As Putin also understands, no Western armies are likely to come to Ukraine's rescue. So will the Russian leader make another land grab? The risks this time are far greater than they were in Crimea—but so are the potential gains for the Kremlin. Ukraine's fate now depends on how Putin weighs them against each other.



A masked pro-Russian protester in the city of Donetsk, in eastern Ukraine



RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The Pew Research Center ranked 232 countries and territories based on their religious makeup. Here's how some placed, from most to least diverse:

1
Singapore

25
France

68
U.S.

176
Peru



Three Essential Facts About India's election

With some 814 million people eligible to vote, the world's largest democratic exercise kicked off on April 7 as polling began in India's five-week-long national election.

RISING OPPOSITION The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), whose candidate for Prime Minister is Narendra Modi, a controversial politician from the state of Gujarat, is set to gain from an economic slowdown under the ruling Congress Party-led coalition, now headed by Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi.

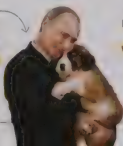
UNCERTAIN RESULT Although the BJP is likely to do well, it may not win enough parliamentary seats to form a government on its own. Another coalition administration remains a distinct possibility, and regional parties could hold sway over key posts and policies.

YOUNG ELECTORATE Nearly half of Indians are under the age of 25, so the country's youth will be instrumental in deciding who wins.

Roundup Unusual diplomatic gifts

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II presented Pope Francis with a basket of culinary delights from her estates, including eggs and scotch whisky, during a recent visit to the Vatican. But she's not the first world leader to offer peculiar gifts.

Puppy
Bulgarian Premier Boyko Borisov presented Vladimir Putin, then Russia's Prime Minister, with a puppy to mark the signing of a gas deal in 2010



Wine cooler
In 1972, French President Georges Pompidou gave the British Queen a wine cooler shaped like a giant grasshopper



Insurance
The head of Australia's Northern Territory took out a \$51,000 crocodile-insurance policy for Barack Obama and gave it to the U.S. President during Obama's 2011 visit to the state




Take That, Taliban!

AFGHANISTAN Election workers sort ballots at a polling station in Kabul. Roughly 58% of registered voters, or about 7 million people, voted in presidential elections on April 5, up from about 38% in the previous poll in 2009. Despite the threat of violence from the Taliban, the vote to pick a successor to President Hamid Karzai was largely peaceful and came as most international troops prepare to leave the country. Preliminary results are due on April 24. *Photograph by Wakil Kohsar—AFP/Getty Images*

WORLD

\$44,000,000



Estimated cost of the hunt for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 since it disappeared on March 8, according to Reuters

Chew toy
In 2011, U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron gave President Obama a **toy bone decorated with the British flag** for his dog Bo

Camel
Mali gave French President François Hollande a **baby camel** last year to thank him for France's help in fighting Islamist rebels



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

'There is a hole in the heart of Africa.'

BAN KI-MOON, U.N. Secretary-General, delivered a **strong warning** against conflict in the region, saying that the situation in the Central African Republic was a **threat to global peace**. He called for a **cease-fire** and **elections**.



Trending In



DIPLOMACY

Venezuela's main opposition group agreed to **Volcan**-mediated talks with President Maduro



RESCUE

Twelve workers were pulled free after spending more than 80 hours trapped in a collapsed train tunnel in China's Jilin province



CRIME

Pakistani police charged a 9-month-old, his father and his grandfather with attempted murder after an officer claimed the family had beaten him up



DISASTER

The U.N. warned that a **looming drought** in Syria could put up to 6.5 million people at risk of a food shortage amid the ongoing conflict

Nation

Skipping Out

Common Core tests spark a parent revolt

BY ALEX ALTMAN

THE MOVEMENT STARTED WITH stomachaches. Every night in the spring of 2012, a third-grader from North Bellmore, N.Y., would sob as he hunched over math worksheets. In the mornings he would beg to stay home. Jeanette Deutermann, the boy's mother, diagnosed the ailment as anxiety over new standardized tests. She did some homework of her own and didn't like what she learned about the curriculum changes or the emphasis on tougher testing. So she decided her son wouldn't take the tests. "I was kind of ground zero," says Deutermann, who is known on Long Island as the mother of the movement to opt out of the Empire State's new exams.

Soon there were pockets of panicked parents scattered throughout New York. On Facebook they swapped tales of impenetrable homework and once enthusiastic students turned sullen and scared by the intensive work needed to prepare for tougher benchmarks they were suddenly being measured against. The culprit, parents argued, was the Common Core—a landmark push to bolster and synchronize U.S. education standards for English and math.

This was a laudable goal. The U.S. lags behind its global counterparts in educational achievement. So in 2010, when the National Governors Association and a team of educators unveiled a new set of standards designed to better

prepare students for college and careers, 45 states quickly signed on. Common Core was hailed as that rare bipartisan jewel. "We were told this was a new curriculum that would raise standards and go deeper. Who could object to such a thing?" says Joseph Rella, a district superintendent on Long Island. "But the devil is in the details, and the details are horrible."

By early April, parents were in open revolt, arguing that the program had flunked. Thousands across New York State pulled their kids out of mandatory English tests. (Students have not been disciplined in these cases.) In Rella's district, 60% of students skipped the exams. The scope of the protests was "unprecedented," says William Johnson, the superintendent in Rockville Centre, where 45% of students opted out. "And it's just beginning."

In late March, Indiana became the first state to scrap the standards. Oklahoma legislators are trying to follow, and lawmakers in a dozen more

states are reviewing the program. In the meantime, protesters hope the opt-out movement "crushes the system," says Janet Wilson, an activist from upstate New York. "This is our way of civil disobedience."

Part of the backlash is political. On the right, Tea Partiers denounce the Common Core as a federal takeover of education. (The charge is inaccurate, although federal grants dispensed through the Obama Administration provide financial incentives.) On the left, teachers' unions and antitesting advocates helped stoke the frenzy.

'THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS, AND THE DETAILS ARE HORRIBLE.'

JOSEPH RELLA,
school superintendent



But much of the opposition to Common Core comes from ordinary parents who don't oppose testing or tougher standards but were shaken by the impact of the program on their children.

Before New York administered its new exams to third-through eighth-graders last year, state officials warned that the results would be grim. In both English and math, only about 30% of students received passing scores—a sharp drop from the previous year. That was by design. "There was a choice made to tell the truth about the standards our students were meeting," says former New York education commissioner David Steiner. "It was a very, very painful truth."

The switch to tougher material was agonizing for New York children and their parents. Teachers had their own test anxieties. In New York, educators' evaluations are tied to student performance. In its haste to adopt the standards, the state gave the exams before it had effectively introduced the new material, say some experts. Teachers felt set up for failure. "There's a genuine sense of anxiety for educators who want to do right by their kids," says Chester Finn, a Common Core supporter and senior fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution.

New York's approach may have been "too much, too fast," says Terry Holliday, the Kentucky education commissioner and president of the Council of Chief State School Officers, who is watching the outcry as many more states prepare to roll out Common Core-aligned tests. "I am worried," Holliday says, "that this could derail the whole effort."

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FOOD

A Costly Lime Shortage

TENSIONS ARE RUNNING HIGH AT LIMÓN Rotisserie, a Peruvian bistro in San Francisco named after the foodstuff central to their signature ceviches and pisco sours. "Our restaurant name is *limón*," says owner Martin Castillo. "We have to use lime."

That's an increasingly costly proposition. America gets 97% of its limes from Mexico, and a combination of bad weather and disease has sent that supply plummeting and prices skyrocketing. A 40-lb. (18 kg) box of limes that cost local restaurateurs about \$20 late last year now goes for \$120. In April the

average retail price for a lime hit 56¢, more than double the price last year.

Across the U.S., bars and restaurants are rationing their supply or, like Alaska Airlines, eliminating limes altogether. In Mexico, the value spike is attracting criminals, forcing growers to guard their limited supply of "green gold" from drug cartels.

Business owners who depend on citrus are hoping that spring growth will soon bring costs back to normal. "Until then," says Castillo, "we just have to take the heat."

—KATY STEINMETZ/SAN FRANCISCO

BREAKING DOWN THE LIME SHORTAGE

Americans are eating more limes than ever



97%

Percentage of fresh limes the U.S. gets from Mexico, Guatemala, which accounts for about 1.5%, is the next biggest source.

The average retail price of a lime is up 133%



\$71.36

The average price of a 40-lb. (18 kg) box of limes as it enters the U.S. from Mexico. (The price grows as it's shipped around the U.S.) In February a box averaged \$18.25.

SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE-ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE AND MARKET NEWS

CYBERSECURITY

Time to Change Your Password. Again

It keeps happening. A newly discovered software bug—this one going by the ominous name Heartbleed—allows hackers to bypass the encryption technology used on many websites to access passwords, credit-card numbers and other sensitive data. By one estimate, as much as 66% of the web is affected, including Yahoo and the popular dating site OkCupid.

Companies are scram-

bling to close off the security flaw in the widely used encryption technology, called OpenSSL, but since the coding error went unnoticed for two years, there's no telling how much information hackers have stolen. Users are advised to change their passwords—but only after confirming that an affected website is no longer susceptible.

Heartbleed is the latest

and farthest-reaching cybersecurity scare in a spate of them affecting everything from cell phones to brick-and-mortar stores like Target. Experts say data will get only more difficult to secure. "There are no secrets on the Internet," says Ari Takanen, founder of Codenomicon, the security firm that discovered Heartbleed. "Something bad can always happen."

—VICTOR LUCKERSON

The Rundown



CITIES Charlotte, N.C., got its fourth mayor in the past year on April 7 when the city council named state senator **Daniel Clodfelter** to succeed Patrick Cannon, who resigned in March after being arrested on public corruption charges. Before Cannon, Patsy Kinsey served out the term of Anthony Foxx, who left to become the U.S. Transportation Secretary.

WEED AND WAGES Maryland became the second state, after Connecticut, to act on President Obama's call to significantly boost the minimum wage, with lawmakers voting on April 5 to raise the baseline pay in the state from \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour by 2018. The legislation was a priority for Democratic governor Martin O'Malley. He said he'll sign another newly passed measure, which removes criminal penalties for adults caught with less than 10 g of marijuana.

FAMILY

29%

The percentage of mothers who don't work outside the home, up from 23% in 1999, according to a new report from the Pew Research Center. Analysts attribute the rising number, a reversal of a three-decade trend, in part to the poor job market.

DEBT A settlement ending the legal fight over **Rhode Island's** 2011 pension overhaul was blocked on April 7 by the smallest of the six affected public employees' unions, scuttling a deal that has been held up as a national model for states trying to get a handle on runaway municipal debt. State officials and unions will now return to mediation.



SAVINGS THAT STAND OUT

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Dispatch

Bush's Twilight Surprise

In the evening of his life, a former President looks back

BY JON MEACHAM
COLLEGE STATION

HE LOVED IT ALL—THE FRIENDLY, eager faces, older now; the war stories, remembered, but not too much, with advantage; the barbecue and the country music and something new, the selfies, through which he gallantly grinned, delighted to be in the thick of things again.

But then George Herbert Walker Bush has always been happiest in a swirl. Earlier this month, during a three-day celebration at his presidential library in College Station, Texas, on the 25th anniversary of his 1989 Inauguration, he was asked how he liked the flood of warmly generous words about his time at the pinnacle of American power. "Hard to believe," the former President said in a voice hoarse with age. His eyebrows rose mischievously. "It's kinder and gentler all over the place."

Approaching his 90th birthday, confined to a wheelchair by a form of Parkinson's that prevents his brain from telling his legs what to do, the 41st President of the United States is in the midst of a unique autumnal chapter of life, at once savoring a favorable shift in the popular view of his Administration's performance while, in classically Bushian fashion, looking forward. Temperamentally disinclined to introspection or even much retrospection, Bush long ago adopted the view that

no setback, particularly in the turbulent world of politics, is permanent. "Time," he often says, "marches on."

It is a congenial season for the Bushes writ large. As the years pass from the tumult of the first decade of the century, George W. Bush seems less polarizing, and his new display of paintings of world leaders at his own library, at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, offers the country—or at least a small part of it—the opportunity to consider him in a different, less glaring light. Bush 41's grandson, George P. Bush, the son of Columba and Jeb, is running a textbook campaign for land commissioner in Texas. (He won the GOP primary in March with 73% of the vote.) And most intriguing of all is whether Jeb will seek the presidency in 2016, possibly setting up yet another Bush-Clinton race in what's be-

The founder George W. Bush's rendering of the 41st President is on display in Dallas

come the American version of the Wars of the Roses.

In an interview with Fox News' Shannon Bream that closed the festivities in College Station, Jeb Bush spoke very much in terms that his father appreciated. "We need ... candidates that are organized around winning the election, not making points," Jeb said. "Campaigns ought to be about listening and learning and getting better. I do think we've lost our way."

Bush 41 hopes Jeb will run; Barbara Bush has said on several occasions that she suspects Americans are tired of Bushes even as she asserts that Jeb would be the best imaginable President. In College Station, Jeb said he would decide on a bid by year's end. "Can

one do it joyfully?" he asked.

It is the kind of question that his father answered in the affirmative over three decades in public life, from the 1964 U.S. Senate race in Texas through the grim 1992 re-election bid. Often seen as a reluctant campaigner, H.W. actually adored politics and privately believes he was better at the game than people generally think. Did he enjoy pitching horseshoes with foreign leaders more than shaking hands in Iowa? A bit, perhaps—but he knew that the latter made the former possible and that without the demands of the campaign trail there would have been no Cold War diplomacy, and maybe no post-Cold War.

What, I asked the former President recently, does the conventional wisdom about you get wrong? "I'm not sure I know anymore," Bush replied. "The common wisdom when Nixon was around and right after was that I wasn't tough enough, you know, wasn't strong enough, maybe you want to say mean enough. I don't know how widespread that was... but publicly it may have been that, may still be, for all I know. It's hard to tell now, but I think there's been a certain revisionism. It seems to blend into 'Thank you for your public service,' not 'Hey, why'd you do this or that on taxes, or right wing or non-right wing.' I'm surprised people remember because I feel like I've gone away, out of the game, all that kind of stuff. I haven't been particularly interested in the legacy thing, except hoping that historians get it right, which I think they will."

He knows too that as the shadows lengthen for him, his family's story in the arena is not over. And for the aging Bush, that sure and certain knowledge makes the twilight sweet. ■



PAUL's breakfast

Sausage & Cheddar

☐

Bacon & Gouda

☐

Turkey Bacon

☐

Slow-roasted Ham

☒

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Milestones



Rooney, photographed as Andy Hardy in 1936, died on April 6 at age 93

DIED

Mickey Rooney Eternal boy wonder

By Olivia de Havilland

Mickey, Mickey, Mickey. They say you have died, but I find this hard to believe, for you are so alive in my memory. There you are, in the big room of the Chamber of Commerce building on Sunset Boulevard in the summer of 1934, a little boy passing easily as a 9-year-old when you are really 13. You hand me your work copy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, climb onto the banquetette beside me, place your head upon my lap and ask me to awaken you nine lines before your cue.

Seven decades later, there you are, in the rehearsal room of the Kodak Theater on Hollywood Boulevard, where 59 Oscar winners are gathering to rehearse their appearance at the Academy's 75th-anniversary broadcast. I am early and already standing in my marks under *D* in line 1. You are early too and head to your own place, which is alongside mine under *R* in line 2—but seeing friends ahead, you go to greet them in your irrepressibly jovial way. Only then do you return and look toward the entrance where new arrivals now appear. I silently turn toward you, waiting for the moment I know will come. You sense something and glance briefly my way. Then you look again, recognition illuminating your face and tears springing to your eyes as you bound across the aisle, fling your arms around my waist and pour forth lines of Shakespeare that are new to me but which come spontaneously to your lips as words meant for meetings like this one. What a memory you have left with me to keep.

De Havilland, 97, won the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1947 and 1950

DIED

John Pinette, 50, stand-up comic who often performed on *The Tonight Show* and *The View*, cracking jokes about his weight, and made a memorable cameo in the series finale of *Seinfeld* in 1998.

DIED

Chuck Stone, 89, longtime columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News whose broadsides against racism and police brutality inspired criminal suspects to turn themselves in to him rather than to the police.



DOOMED

Beloved comic-book character **Archie Andrews**, in the July 16 issue of *Life With Archie*, a series that explores his future, he will die saving a friend. He will continue to appear in comic-book stories about "the present."

DIED

Peaches Geldof, 25, British television presenter, model and daughter of rock musician and philanthropist Bob Geldof. The cause of death was unknown at press time.



DIED

Curtis Bill Pepper, 96, profile reporter and author who traveled throughout Europe and the Middle East covering topics from the Vatican to King Hussein of Jordan and Laurence Olivier.

DIED

Peter Matthiessen The writer's writer

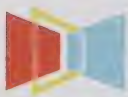
By Richard Ford

Peter Matthiessen is a hero to me. Time and good luck allowed me to tell him so. He was a hero to a lot of people, especially writers. He did everything a writer would want to do in a life, and wrote supremely. He wrote fiction (*At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, *Shadow Country*) and nonfiction (*The Snow Leopard*, *Men's Lives*) as well as it can be done but seemed, to me at least, to portray a conviction that a writer merely writes—sometimes this way, sometimes that, just always at the highest level of one's capability. Peter, who was 86 when he died on April 5, practiced Zen Buddhism. Thus, narrow, generic categories were not much his interest.

In life he took risks—physical, emotional, intellectual. He championed causes, made important and needful things happen using only words. He cared for the plight of Indians, of fishermen and fish, of leopards, birds, the misunderstood, even the scourged among us. He made the right people mad at him and did not falter. No easy trick. In life, as on the page, he was this man's man. I won't see his like again. I'm sure of that.

Ford is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Independence Day*





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Rana Foroohar

A Little Trouble in Big China

The world's second largest economy needs to confront its growing debt problem



ONE OF THE MOST TELLING ECONOMIC events since the financial crisis has gone almost entirely unnoticed. A few weeks ago, China had its first corporate-bond default. The company in question, a solar-energy-equipment firm called Shanghai Chaori, was small, private, highly leveraged and not very important. But the default speaks volumes about the state of the world's second largest economy. China is in the middle of a debt crisis the likes of which we haven't seen since the fall of Lehman Brothers. Chaori's default was tiny by comparison. It couldn't make a payment on a \$163 million bond; Lehman owed \$613 billion when it folded. But it's the tip of an iceberg that is now nearly double the size of China's GDP. By allowing Chaori to go bust, the Chinese signaled they're no longer in denial about the problem.

That matters in a country in which statistics are precooked and every economic move, even the run-up in debt itself, is planned. Back in December 2008, I met in Beijing with Jiang Jiansheng, the head of ICBC, China's largest financial institution. He acknowledged that the massive government stimulus program that was put in place to cope with the global slowdown would result in a higher percentage of bad Chinese loans. After all, when Beijing says, "Lend," state-owned banks ask, "How much?" even if borrowers aren't creditworthy. China's biggest banks wrote off more than twice the level of bad loans last year as they did in 2012.

That's no surprise given the size of China's debt bubble. Over a year ago, Ruchir Sharma, head of emerging markets for Morgan Stanley Investment Management, pointed out that China was pumping out credit faster than any other country. The problem: much of it went into dubious public-sector investment (unnecessary rail lines and housing projects) rather than productive private enterprises. Five years ago it took just over a dollar of debt to create a dollar of economic growth in China. Today it takes four dollars of debt to create a dollar of growth. Those are crisis numbers by any standard.

A FINANCIAL CRISIS IN CHINA ISN'T THE SAME as one in the U.S. For one, Chinese debt is almost completely Chinese-owned. A large chunk of it is in the public sector, and the central government, which holds some \$4 trillion in reserves, can bail out firms at will. Indeed, as the Conference Board's China economist Andrew Polk points out,

CHINA'S DEBT MATH



\$4

Amount of debt it now takes to stimulate \$1 of Chinese GDP growth



\$4

TRILLION

Amount the Chinese central government has in reserve

they've done that more than 20 times in the past two years, a measure of how long the crisis has been brewing. "It will be difficult for China to have a Lehman moment," he says, "because China can always find a buyer of last resort somewhere in the state system."

That sounds good, but it also means China can let its debt crisis fester. That will only make things worse in the long run, increasing moral hazard and slowing economic growth, which may be as low as 5% this year. (That's down from double digits a few years back.) Worse, the government is already using those figures as a reason to backtrack on its recent promises to reform the economy. Beijing is now talking about more stimulus to keep the country's growth rate up around the 7% it says is needed to keep unemployment from reaching dangerous levels. China's leaders fear unemployed masses taking to the streets: historically in the Middle Kingdom, those sorts of events tend to end with people being paraded around and then shot.

TROUBLE IS, THE ARGUMENT THAT MORE DEBT is needed to keep unemployment down no longer holds water. As Sharma points out, every percentage point of GDP growth now creates around 1.7 million new jobs—up from 1.2 million a decade ago. Also, fewer young people are coming into the workforce as the population ages. That means even 5% growth would likely keep the Chinese economy stable. So why isn't the country doing more to deflate its debt bubble and change its economic model? Because as in the U.S., the political and economic elite have little impetus to change a system that has made them fantastically wealthy.

That's the real economic risk factor in China right now. While Beijing may allow firms like Chaori, which are not systemically important, to go under in order to convince people that it's grappling with the debt issues, provincial governments and state-owned companies are still too big to fail. That might not result in a Lehman Brothers moment. But it will make it harder and harder for the country to move to its next stage of economic development, which, given that China has represented about a third of global growth since the 2008 financial crisis, has implications for us all. Will China be a drag or a boon to the global economy? Perhaps more than at any other time since the country began its transition to capitalism some 30 years ago, the answer is as blurry as the air in Beijing.

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Why Obama Hit Pause

An Iran deal may be possible. Getting Israelis and Palestinians to make peace may not be



WE KNOW WHAT A REASONABLE MIDDLE East peace would look like. In December 2000, Bill Clinton laid out the formula. There would be a return to the 1967 borders, with mutually agreed-upon land swaps so that the bulk—perhaps 80%—of Jewish settlements on Palestinian lands could become part of Israel. Jerusalem would be the capital of both countries. An international commission would control the religious sites in Jerusalem's Old City. Palestinian refugees would have the right to return to Palestine but not to Israel. Israel's sovereignty and security as a Jewish state would be accepted by the Arabs.

There have been other iterations of a framework agreement in the past 14 years, but they're all based on Clinton's plan, as Clinton's was on previous plans. For those who actually want to see a Middle East peace negotiated, this is the consensus solution. In principle, it is favored by a majority of the Israeli and Palestinian publics and by the Saudis and the Arab League. In practice, who knows? The Israelis are always litigious about the details; the Palestinians always walk away at the last minute. But leading American strategists like Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski have said the way to negotiate the impasse is for the U.S. to present an updated version of the framework and allow international pressure to push the Israelis and the Palestinians toward peace.

JOHN KERRY SEEMED INTENT ON DOING THAT too. But his version of the framework has never been announced—and the chance of the two parties' producing their own mutually agreed-upon outline evaporated long ago, if it ever existed in the first place. Kerry deserves credit for the energy he's put into the process, but there has been a tinge of desperation to his efforts over the past months—a reminder of the wobbly garrulousness that has damaged President Obama's foreign policy since he took office. Kerry raised the loathsome possibility of releasing Jonathan Pollard, a U.S. citizen who spied for Israel, in order to cajole the Israelis into continuing the talks. Then, in congressional testimony on April 8, he weirdly blamed the Israelis for the impasse because of their insistence on building 700 new apartments in an East Jerusalem neighborhood, Gilo, that everyone assumes will be part of Israel if the borders are redrawn. There has been, as

with Syria last summer, a melted cheesiness to his public statements when the heat is on.

Why hasn't Kerry published a framework for the talks as promised? In my interviews with current and former diplomats, a prevailing theme emerged: a reiteration of the Clinton framework would activate the Sheldon Adelson neoconservative wing of the Republican Party, plus many Christian evangelicals who see the annexation of the West Bank territories as biblical prophesy, and this is a fight that Obama doesn't particularly want at this point. Why not? The President may want to keep his powder dry, in part to keep Jewish voters on the reservation in the 2014 midterms but also because another, more promising fight is looming with the neoconservatives—over the Iran nuclear talks.

Indeed, the Iran talks seem to be going as well as the Middle East talks are going poorly. That's why you haven't read much about them in recent weeks. There are still major issues to overcome, but Western negotiators have been impressed by the Iranians' seriousness and unwillingness to use extraneous events—like the U.S.-Russian tiff over Ukraine—to try to delay the talks or split the U.N. alliance. It is not inconceivable that a deal limiting Iran's ability to enrich uranium and a strict regimen of international inspections will be completed by the end of the year... although, once again, the Administration won't want it to be finished until after the midterm elections.

THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALKS CONTINUE to chug along, at the request of the Israelis and Palestinians, even after Kerry declared them moribund. It turns out that neither side wants to abandon the illusion of progress—and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in particular, may be keeping his powder dry for the Iran fight as well. But the paralyzed talks have now become another reminder of the Administration's perceived weakness in foreign policy. Iran may well prove to be the President's ultimate test—not just the political test of maneuvering a treaty through a Congress heavily influenced by the Israel lobby but also the diplomatic test of dealing with a complicated, opaque Iran, where the reactionary forces will want to reassert their authority if the treaty is successfully negotiated. A remarkable achievement may be within Obama's grasp, but he and his Secretary of State are going to have to prove more solid, subtle and dependable policy implementers than they have in the past.

CAN WE TALK?



11

Number of trips Kerry has made to Israel in the past year



70%

Percentage of U.S. Jews who support the Democratic Party

SOURCES: U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT; PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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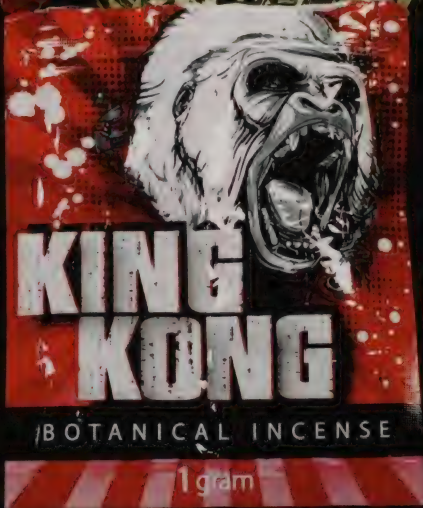


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of synthetic
cannabinoid
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THE DRUG THREAT IN PLAIN SIGHT

SYNTHETIC POT IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

BY ELIZA GRAY/AMARILLO, TEXAS

ON THE MORNING OF JUNE 26, 2013, before heading to work at a bingo hall in Amarillo, Texas, Roni Cannon had a premonition. When her son Jesse High, 18, had started smoking something he called K2 about 12 months before, Cannon thought it was just a strong tobacco he reacted badly to. She disapproved, but when she asked him what it was, he said it was no big deal. "This is like a legal marijuana," he told her.

Cannon knew smoke shops sold K2, so she accepted his answer—and some of the effects did seem similar to those of marijuana. Jesse often had bloodshot eyes and acted sleepy and incoherent. But there were other, more worrisome signs: her once cheerful son had become easily aggravated, and when she hugged him, she noticed, he smelled like an alkaline battery that had exploded. She urged him to quit, but things only got worse. When Jesse threatened to hurt his younger sister during a dispute over the remote, Cannon felt she had no choice but to kick him out.

In the last week of June, buoyed by a promise that he'd stopped using K2, Cannon went to visit Jesse at his new job at the Texas Chicken Wok. He seemed better. He had put weight back on, and his boss told her Jesse was one of his best workers. Jesse said he was sorry he'd missed his sister's birthday. As soon as he got his next paycheck, he promised, he would take her out.

Just a few days later, Cannon had her premonition. "I guess you could call it a mother's intuition or something. Something was just nagging at me to call him, to check on him." She didn't have time before work, so she thought, I'll call him on my break—make sure he's O.K., "and I went to work."

THE MOST COMPLICATED DRUG PROBLEM IN THE world right now isn't meth or cocaine or the heroin that's been making a comeback and killed actor Philip Seymour Hoffman. It is synthetic drugs, also known as legal highs or designer drugs. Five years ago, these substances were virtually unheard of. Now, say drug monitors and law-enforcement officials, they are spreading to eager buyers everywhere at an unprecedented speed. "It is widespread in scope. It is in every state," says Joseph Rannazzisi, head of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency group responsible for synthetics. "I don't recall any other drug issue where we had the same problem."

With street names like K2 and Spice, these substances are widely available, sold openly in stores with little fear of prosecution. Faced with their rapid proliferation, legislators are looking for ways to

→
TEXAS TRAGEDY
Roni Cannon holds a picture of her son Jesse High, a K2 smoker. He died last year

respond. "We have to be as sophisticated as the crooks and the drug dealers that are putting these illegal drugs out there, and our laws just simply aren't," says Senator Amy Klobuchar, who has introduced a bill to make it easier to prosecute synthetic-drug crimes.

Mixed by chemists in labs, mostly in Asia, synthetics are chemical compounds designed to mimic the effects of naturally occurring drugs like marijuana and cocaine while staying just inside the law. Because the newest compounds don't yet appear on state and federal lists of illegal drugs, the sellers can market them as legal. As soon as authorities add a compound to the prohibited list, the chemists tweak the formula—ever so slightly—to make a new substance that purports to be legal.

Though their effects can be quite different from those of the traditional drugs they mimic, synthetics appear in forms that look and feel similar. Substances typically labeled as GLASS CLEANER or the now infamous BATH SALTS are synthetic cathinones, stimulants that come in white powders that can be snorted, swallowed or injected to achieve a cocaine-or-methlike high.

But the real boom is in chemicals meant to stand in for pot. HERBAL INCENSE and POTPOURRI are among the labels found on synthetic cannabinoids, which act on the same receptor in the brain as THC, the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis—that is, marijuana. They are typically sprayed on an inert, leafy plant (often damiana or marshmallow leaf) that users buy and smoke.

Cannabinoids are now the most popular kind of synthetic, and the increasing legalization of pot may further burnish the myth that these chemicals are mostly harmless. But their effects, which are only beginning to be understood, can be unpredictable and dangerous. Emergency rooms and poison-control centers have reported synthetic-related kidney failure, seizures and psychoses.

Synthetic pot appeals to some users because it can evade detection by urine tests. The relatively low price of cannabinoids—packets sell for as little as \$10—along with the notion that they are legal and therefore safe has helped them make inroads with teens. Actual pot remains the top drug in that age group—in 2013, 29.8% of students in 10th grade reported using it during the past year, according to an NIH-sponsored survey. But even factoring in a decline since 2012 amid growing police vigilance, the far riskier synthetic marijuana came in second, with 7.4% saying they had tried it.

The traditional months-long process for declaring a new substance illegal isn't equipped to handle the synthetics problem, where the new possibilities are quick and easy to make and, quite literally, endless.

Photograph by Brent Humphreys for TIME



"They are coming out so fast that we are in catch-up mode," says Terry Boos, a chemist in the Office of Diversion Control at the DEA.

Drug cops have been struggling to keep pace—a Sisyphean task, it turns out. Everything about the way synthetics are made, imported, sold and detected defies the traditional approach to enforcement. The buying and selling of illegal drugs traditionally happens underground, requiring incriminating phone calls or clandestine exchanges of money and contraband. Synthetics, in contrast, are sold in convenience stores, gas stations and head shops in heat-sealed foil packets with a bar code, named for household products like potpourri, incense, bath salts and plant food and labeled NOT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION.

Ultimately, it is the open manner in which synthetics are sold that makes them so difficult to police. As with any other disruptive innovation, responding will require rethinking the old playbook. It also means exposing myths about the safety and legality of these compounds. Police, prosecutors, judges, communities and parents will all need to recognize that if the drug pushers are playing by new rules, so must they.

SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA ARRIVED IN AMARILLO IN early 2010. A city of roughly 200,000 in the Texas Panhandle, Amarillo smells of the manure on the cattle ranches surrounding it. Meatpacking and nuclear-weapons assembly are chief occupations. As in many other places, authorities say, the first synthetic-cannabinoid users in Amarillo were trying to get high without getting caught by routine drug tests at work.

The drug has since become popular with kids enticed by the low cost, typically \$10 to \$50 for a packet. In a 2013 survey of Amarillo Independent School District students, 11% of kids in grades six through 12 had tried synthetic marijuana. That was down from 2012 but still showed that roughly 1 in 9 kids had tried synthetics within the past year.

In April, the Amarillo police department sent an undercover officer to a local shop called Planet X. According to the police case report, the officer bought a packet with the brand name Gorilla Dro Po Po. The crime lab's instruments often don't recognize synthetics, but testing found XLR-11, a cannabinoid. Texas law bans a cannabinoid if it "mimics the pharmacological effect of naturally occurring cannabinoids" (read: it can get you high). XLR-11 would be added to the DEA's list of illegal substances a few weeks later. It has been blamed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for incidents of acute kidney injury. (A lawyer for Planet X, which has denied any wrongdoing, says police never provided a sample for independent testing.)

ENDLESS VARIATIONS

Colorfully packaged synthetic cannabinoids, like these examples seized by the DEA, are sold under hundreds of brand names

Three days later, armed with a search warrant, the police raided Planet X and seized 92 packets of Gorilla Dro Po Po. They filed the case with the Potter County district attorney's office as possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance. Citing a lack of evidence to prove that the Gorilla Dro Po Po was illegal, the district attorney's office declined to prosecute the case.

On June 26, emergency services received a call at 12:02 p.m. "Amarillo 911. What's the address of your emergency?" says a female operator's voice on the recording. The other voice belongs to the friend who discovered Jesse High: "Yes, ma'am, um, this is... one of my friends. I just came from my house and I opened the door, and like I don't know if he's all right. He's not waking up." The operator, who dispatched the paramedics, asks, "Is he breathing?" "Nope." For the next five minutes the operator repeatedly counts one, two, three, four, as the friend gives Jesse CPR.

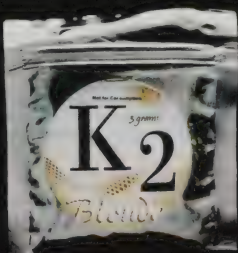
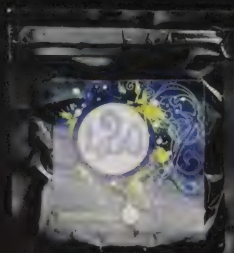
About two hours after the 911 call, two police officers arrived at the bingo hall and told Roni Cannon that her son was dead. The cause of death was "probable complications of synthetic cannabinoid ingestion," according to the official autopsy report by Dr. Thomas R. Parsons for Potter County.

Understanding exactly what happened to Jesse beyond that is complicated. The autopsy report says Jesse exhibited pulmonary and cerebral edema—excess fluid in the lungs and the brain. The report underscores the challenge of trying to ascertain exactly what happens with presumed victims of synthetics: it states that lab tests were negative for "commonly available" cannabinoids but notes that tests were not yet available for "many additional" cannabinoids that are believed to be sold under the name K2.

Medical experts caution that a single dose of a synthetic cannabinoid can be hazardous because of the crude way in which producers spray the chemicals onto inert plant material that is then smoked. If the cannabinoid is sprayed unevenly, it can create hot spots where the concentration of the chemical is dangerously high. But because there is so little medical research on these novel compounds, their precise effect is not well understood.

Cannon says she believes that Jesse died from K2 he bought at Planet X. In a case filed Oct. 1, 2013, in 251st District Court in Potter County, she is suing Planet X's owner, Brandon Whisenunt, for negligence, among other claims, and seeking wrongful-death damages and additional compensation. In a court filing dated Oct. 8, Whisenunt denies all allegations.

I visited Planet X on the Friday before Christmas, about six months after Jesse's death. Housed in a sand-colored strip mall along with an automotive garage and a restaurant, the store was unmarked save



for an electric red and yellow OPEN sign and a piece of computer paper with a typed holiday schedule.

Inside, I told the clerk behind the register that I was a reporter and asked if they sold potpourri. "We sell herbal incense," he said. "Can it be smoked?" I asked. "No. It's not for human consumption," he replied before he added, "I can't really make a comment on that. I've been instructed not to do news. I can't for news reasons. I was told by my boss." I asked if he would just show me the herbal incense. "I mean, I would just rather not," he said.

A man came in the front door and addressed the clerk. "How's it going, man? Can I get Ripped?" "Ten dollars," said the clerk, handing him a thin package in exchange for the money so fast I could barely get a glimpse of it. (Amarillo police say they're aware of substances labeled Ripped and believe they could contain K2, though they have not yet tested them.)

I went outside for 15 minutes and counted nine people, almost all young men, going in and out for no more than 30 seconds each. Days later I called the owner of the shopping center, Justin Chapman, to ask his view. "I'm in the landlord business," Chapman said. "If it's against the law, the authorities will shut them down, but if it's not against the law, I'm going to leave them alone." (Chapman later told TIME he had changed his mind and evicted Planet X and will lease the space to a restaurant.)

MARIJUANA HAS BEEN IN USE FOR CENTURIES, AND its common side effects—like red eyes and increased appetite—are well known. Though opponents cite concerns that it can serve as a gateway drug and harm developing teen brains, at least on the spectrum of mood-altering substances pot is considered relatively safe. That has helped enable the movement that legalized recreational marijuana in Washington and Colorado.

Synthetic cannabinoids are a different matter. Doctors say symptoms caused by these drugs include vomiting, seizures and excessive heart rate. U.S. emergency rooms saw 11,406 visits involving synthetic cannabinoids in 2010, the latest year for which data is available, according to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which had not tracked the substances before that year. That figure is a fraction of the 2.3 million drug-related ER visits overall, though SAMHSA notes that synthetic-related visits may be undercounted because of hospitals' limited ability to screen for the substances.

Law-enforcement authorities, chemists and forensic toxicologists often compare synthetic drug use to Russian roulette, with risks ranging from injury to death. Assessing the threat from any specific compound is difficult; these are not pharmaceuticals

subject to safety trials but instead are endless variations cooked up by chemists with no regard for how they might harm the human body.

"Your kids are being experimented on," says Rannazzisi, the DEA point person on synthetics who heads the Office of Diversion Control. "They cause physical harm, mental harm and death."

The research is limited, but it is also worrisome. A January 2014 study in the peer-reviewed journal *Forensic Science Review* surveyed research findings about the biological effects of cannabinoids and described "growing toxicological and pharmacological evidence of impairment, psychosis, tissue injury and isolated deaths attributable to this emerging class of drugs." In 2012, a paper in the peer-reviewed journal *Academic Forensic Pathology* attributed the death of a 17-year-old male who had smoked a synthetic cannabinoid to cardiac arrest "as the result of the toxic effects of synthetic cannabinoids." That study was considered notable for being the first to use toxicology testing to link a cannabinoid to a victim's death.

Even though nearly everyone agrees about the dangers of synthetics, authorities say combatting them is far from simple. Makers in Asia, where the manufacture of most synthetics is legal, are known to ship their products—undetectable by drug-sniffing dogs—to the U.S. by UPS and FedEx. That's one reason the U.S. has begun discussions with China about the export of these substances, according to R. Gil Kerlikowske, the former White House drug czar who is now commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. "We've worked pretty hard with China," he says. "Some of those chemicals are not against the law in that particular country."

Local cops say they struggle with how to handle stores in their communities that are selling synthetics. "[If] we knew it was illegal for sure and we could go in and seize everything they have, we would," says Randy Mincher, an Amarillo police department undercover narcotics officer.

Randall Sims, the Potter County district attorney, also blames the legal ambiguity created when these substances are sold openly, labeled as herbal incense or potpourri. In the case of Planet X, Sims says, there simply was not sufficient evidence to prosecute. "Texas law requires that a person intentionally or knowingly deliver an illegal substance," he says. It's one thing to convince a jury that a seller is aware of a substance's illegality when engaging in furtive alleyway deals. "When you step into the storefront, all of that goes away," Sims explains. "If it says potpourri and you just walk in, you grab a bag of potpourri and you walk out, you just bought a bag of potpourri as far as the evidence that can be established in court."

↓

177
Incidents
involving synthetic
marijuana
reported to U.S.
poison-control
centers in January

7.4%
Percentage of
10th-graders
who said they
used synthetic
cannabinoids in
2013, according
to a U.S.
government survey

Absent criminal charges, Roni Cannon decided in October to pursue her lawsuit against Planet X. "These merchants know exactly what these people are doing with this stuff," Cannon told me. "I'm not trying to portray my son as being an angel or that he was this super kid with a promising future," she says. "My son had his problems. He dropped out of school. We had that rocky relationship. But that doesn't necessarily mean that my son deserved to die this way."

Her lawyer, Vincent Nowak, hopes for a jury trial this summer. He says he will argue that Planet X violated Texas' Deceptive Trade Practices Act. Specifically, he will argue that store owner Whisenhunt knew Planet X was selling something dangerous and failed to warn Jesse. To Nowak, the idea that anyone takes the product labeled *POTPOURRI* in Planet X at face value defies credulity. "It smells like dog sh-t," he says.

Whisenhunt did not return repeated calls for comment. His attorney, David Martinez, tells *TIME* his client didn't sell synthetic pot to anyone, period, let alone to Cannon's son, despite the crime-lab findings in the Amarillo police report on the Gorilla Dro Po Po bust. "What I'm telling you is that there are no known cannabinoids in the product they are selling. That stuff gets tested... If the lab results confirm that there are no cannabinoids under the Texas or federal statute, then they can legally sell the stuff," Martinez says.

So what is the product that Planet X is selling? "To make a place smell good," Martinez says. "Same stuff they sell at Walmart." I tell him that based on the per-gram price, Planet X appears to be selling potpourri at something like \$280 an ounce. (An ounce of potpourri at Walmart costs about 40¢.) Martinez's response: "There must be something in it that people like."

COMBATting the SPREAD of DANGEROUS SYNTHETIC drugs will require new approaches to law enforcement. Accepting that it has become impossible to draft laws that list every possible illegal drug, many states have adopted their own versions of federal laws that make it unlawful to sell a drug that is substantially similar chemically to a substance on the banned list. In theory, this allows prosecution over synthetics that have not been specifically identified. In practice, it's difficult: these cases require expert testimony from chemists who argue in court over a drug's chemical structure—a challenge for juries.

So the next step, many drug experts say, is to take the science out of the courtroom. Instead of focusing on the contents or makeup of the synthetic drugs, this new strategy goes after the way they are sold.



\$51 MILLION
Cash and assets seized—along with 9,445 kg of packaged synthetic drugs—in the first half of 2013 by Project Synergy, the DEA's largest national synthetic-drug-enforcement operation

Products marketed as herbal incense or bath salts, the thinking goes, should be usable for those purposes. Likewise, if they can get you high, sellers have a reasonable responsibility to know that.

To that end, Senator Klobuchar, a Minnesota Democrat, has introduced a bill that would allow federal prosecutors to build cases using factors like packaging, price and manufacturing practices as evidence of intent to sell an illegal drug. If a product is marketed as bath salts and labeled *NOT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION* but it smells terrible, doesn't work in the bathtub, costs outlandishly more than products from mainstream retailers and has a package that depicts a man with his eyes crossed out, the seller ought to know that he is selling a drug that can get you high.

Other states are following a similar approach, but rather than pressing criminal charges they're targeting synthetic-drug sellers with civil monetary fines. In Colorado a bill introduced in January would add synthetic drugs to the state's Deceptive Trade Practices Act, levying fines for false marketing of up to \$500,000 per packet.

But public perceptions may ultimately be just as important as legal strategies. The myths of legality and safety leave kids particularly vulnerable; many users still don't understand the difference between synthetics and the real thing. The growing legalization of pot may muddy the picture. In early January a man was hospitalized in Denver, reportedly after smoking a synthetic marijuana labeled *GIRL SCOUT COOKIES*—which also happens to be the name of a popular brand of natural marijuana, indicating that synthetics' marketers may take advantage of the surge in legal pot use to push their deadlier version.

"We certainly started hearing about the problems with spice [a common name for synthetic cannabinoids in Colorado] when the marijuana issue peaked," says the state representative behind the Colorado bill, Republican Lois Landgraf. "If I could buy an ounce of marijuana for \$300 to \$500 or I could go buy a packet of spice for \$5 to \$20, I'm going to go for synthetics if you think they are the same product. Part of the problem is not knowing that spice is deadly."

Which means the challenge for parents, communities, authorities and schools is teaching kids about the risks. Reports to poison-control centers of complications due to synthetic marijuana use dropped by half in 2013 from 2012, though that may partly indicate that doctors, having become more familiar with synthetics, don't feel a need to consult with poison control. But the DEA's Rannazzisi isn't reassured. "Kids are still going to the hospital," he says.

The Humbling Of the Senate's Master

SUCCESS IN WASHINGTON NO LONGER TRANSLATES TO THE BALLOT BOX. IT'S MADE MITCH MCCONNELL A TARGET

BY JAY NEWTON-SMALL/LOUISVILLE

ALASKA SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI SAW MITCH McConnell coming, and she was not happy about it. The Republican leader was making his way between the mahogany desks on the Senate floor in February, trying to drum up just five GOP votes to raise the debt ceiling in exchange for zero concessions on spending from the White House.

For Republicans, it was a brutal vote, a cave to the President and an insult to the Tea Party. And Murkowski suspected McConnell had no intention of voting for it himself, not this year. His position back in Kentucky had become perilous. Just days earlier, a local newspaper poll found that 32% of his state's voters approved of his job performance, an approval rating 2 points lower than the same poll gave President Obama. Polls also showed a dead heat between McConnell and the Democrat he hoped to face in November, a situation made no easier by a Tea Party primary challenger's attacking him as an ideological wimp. At the age of 72, after 29 years in office and on the cusp of potentially becoming majority leader this fall, McConnell had never been more powerful in Washington or less loved where it mattered: back home.

His strategy for dealing with the situation was as obvious as it was cagey: avoid the toughest fights and delegate the hardest issues to his deputies. He hadn't met with his Democratic counterpart, Senate majority leader Harry Reid, all year. He had shifted legislative negotiations to other Republicans even on issues like immigration reform where he usually was at the forefront. To woo Tea Party conservatives, he was the only leader to oppose authorizing a military strike on Syria, called for more regulation for the Federal Reserve and pushed a pilot program on industrial hemp (a pet issue for libertarian-minded activists).



But it wasn't enough. The debt-ceiling increase had to pass, or the nation risked default, and McConnell was responsible for making it happen. So he held open the 15-minute vote, wandering through the chamber in an Irish green tie, asking for volunteers. That was when Murkowski confronted him, according to three people who witnessed the event. She told him point-blank she was tired of taking tough votes for leadership while he gave himself a pass. He had to lead.

An hour later, McConnell did just that. Murkowski watched him cast his vote before she cast her own. And then came the pain. Within days, McConnell's Tea Party primary challenger, Matt Bevin, had an ad running on Kentucky airwaves. "Mitch McConnell betrayed conservatives to give Obama a blank check," it declared.

A Bluegrass Revolt?

IT'S BECOME A STANDARD RITUAL FOR the nation's most powerful politicians to find themselves twisting, begging, groveling and backtracking now that voters hate what they do (or don't do) in Washington. Utah Republican Bob Bennett, then a member of McConnell's leadership team, lost his primary for a fourth term in 2010. Former Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar lost his bid for a sixth term in 2012 after it turned out he didn't even maintain a residence in Indiana. These challenges came in the shadow cast by former Senate majority leader Tom Daschle, a South Dakota Democrat, who in 2004 became the first leader in 52 years to lose re-election. The skills that make for a great leader—taking a backseat to promote others, a talent for compromise and a Machiavellian ruthlessness—are the

McConnell displays little feel for voters and obvious discomfort in crowds

antithesis of what makes for a good candidate back home. Norm Ornstein, a congressional scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, notes that the longer leaders stay in D.C., the less adroit they seem to become on the campaign trail. "I'm mystified at how some of these leaders ever got elected in the first place," he says.

Unlike some of his predecessors, McConnell isn't pretending to be a great campaigner or even a very good one. Instead, he is doubling down on the I'm-the-devil-you-know argument and betting it will work fine. "There's just been a whole variety of things that I have been able to do for the state in the position that my colleagues have chosen me for," McConnell said in an interview in March. "My opponent would be a new face: no change, the same majority leader, the same approach. If we're focusing on the country writ large, the only way to begin to change is to change the Senate and put me in charge of setting the agenda instead of Harry Reid."

Kentucky is marbled with reminders of McConnell's ability to bring home the bacon. The state GOP headquarters is named for him, as are the University of Louisville's Center for Political Leadership, the Mitch McConnell Plaza in Owensboro and the River Walk at Mitch McConnell Park in Bowling Green. Back in Washington, his colleagues hold him in even higher re-

gard. "He's the grumpy uncle that we don't embrace at family parties," says Bennett, "but when there are family squabbles, he's the wise old uncle that everyone turns to."

Even the White House, sometimes. It was McConnell who made the late-night phone calls to Vice President Joe Biden to extend the Bush tax cuts in 2010 and who came up with the brilliant legislative pretzel that allowed Republicans to grant Obama debt-ceiling raises later that year in exchange for a series of politically painful show votes. His skills as a back-room operator, conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer once suggested, could bring peace to Syria. "McConnell is a master dealmaker."

But clout in D.C. may matter less than votes in Kentucky. Brenda Baumler, 58, a real estate agent from Louisville, grew up voting for McConnell. On a rainy March afternoon, though, she found herself at an event for Bevin. "Mitch McConnell's too Washingtonized," she explained. "He's out of touch. He's been there too long. He's become part of the machine, beholden to lobbyists' views. We put him there, and he's not empathetic to why he's there."

This malaise is evident all across the state. Bevin has advertised all 750-plus of his town halls online and stays for hours to answer every last question. And he proudly notes in every speech that he's driven 40,000 miles across Kentucky in the nine months he's been campaigning. McConnell, by comparison, holds many events in secret: invitation-only affairs with select supporters, often closed to the media or carefully choreographed. He displays little feel for voters and obvious discomfort in crowds. Childhood polio has left him resistant to backslapping and handshakes, and a hearing problem makes it seem as if he often ignores people in crowds. At a Calloway County dinner in mid-March, McConnell came in flanked by his security detail and Texas Governor Rick Perry, who'd flown in to be his wingman. "You're looking at the guy who's going to change the Senate with a new majority and take America in a new direction," McConnell told the audience. He then made a low-key exit without working the room.

Enter Laughing—or Packing

IT IS A MEASURE OF MCCONNELL'S SERIOUSNESS that he hired Jesse Benton, a longtime strategist for former Representative Ron

Late-Night Mitch

MCCONNELL HAS LATELY GENERATED A LOT OF BUZZ, NOT ALWAYS IN A GOOD WAY



After Obama implied he would be a lousy guy to get a drink with, McConnell tweeted this invite



After his campaign manager said he was "holding my nose" working with McConnell, they posted this



A YouTube ad of less-than-natural McConnell smiles became grist for late-night comedians



Paul and his son Rand, to manage his campaign. It was an odd pairing. McConnell tried to crush Tea Party favorite Rand Paul's candidacy in 2010 and blamed Tea Party insurgents for costing Republicans the Senate majority in 2010 and 2012. Soon the awkwardness of the pairing burst into public view. Benton, who is married to one of Ron Paul's granddaughters, was caught on tape several months into the job saying he was "holding my nose" through the McConnell campaign to help position Rand Paul for a presidential run. When the tape leaked in August 2013, McConnell couldn't afford to fire Benton. Instead, the pair posted a picture online of Benton holding his nose with one hand, his other arm around a smiling McConnell.

Such antics have become a key element of his campaign. McConnell, who collects cartoons of himself that he hangs in his Senate office, likes to play up mockery of himself as much as he tries to play off embarrassments. Not everyone always gets his sense of humor. Last April at the

Face-off If McConnell wins, he's likely to get majority leader Harry Reid's job

White House Correspondents' Dinner, Obama told a joke about McConnell's lack of charm. "Really? Why don't you get a drink with Mitch McConnell?" went the punch line. McConnell responded by posting an awkward picture of himself with his jacket off, BlackBerry holstered at his hip, sitting cross-legged at a bar with a glass of beer—waiting for Obama.

Last month at the annual gathering of the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, McConnell took the stage waving a vintage rifle. "He didn't look at home with a gun, and I can't remember any occasion where I've seen or heard of McConnell shooting," says Al Cross, who covered McConnell for more than 15 years at the *Courier-Journal* in Louisville and now teaches at the University of Kentucky.

Given his long-standing ties to the state, his preparation for a tough campaign (Daschle realized the danger too

late) and his \$11 million war chest, the smart money still gives McConnell the edge to win in a year likely to favor Republicans. A fifth and last term as majority leader would enable a man who decided in elementary school that his dream was to be Senate majority leader a chance to shut down the Obama agenda once and for all. "As the President has said on repeated occasions, I'm his biggest problem," McConnell notes with pride. A McConnell-run Senate could mean a host of filibusters and vetoes in Obama's last two years in office.

That said, McConnell tells *TIME* that if Republicans win the Senate, he'll govern like George Mitchell, the former Democratic majority leader, who, it should be noted, drove George H.W. Bush crazy in 1991 and '92. "I'm talking about style here, not substance," McConnell says. "I think he treated everyone with respect." Until then, though, McConnell knows better than most what it feels like to get none of that. ■



WORLD

UNHOLY CHOICES

CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST FIND
THEMSELVES AT A CROSSROADS IN A
REGION ROCKED BY WAR AND REVOLUTION

BY ARYN BAKER/CAIRO



Seeking redemption Worshippers mark the beginning of Lent with Mass at St. Samaan Church in Cairo

Photograph by Mosa'ab Elshamy for TIME

HALF AN OUNCE OF GOLD.

In the 7th century, that's how much Christians in what is now Syria had to pay for the privilege of living under the protection of the Caliphate. If they didn't want to pay, they had two other options: they could convert or, as some interpretations of the pact between Muslim rulers and their Christian subjects suggest, "face the sword."

In February, the 20 or so Christian families still living in the northern Syrian town of Raqqa were given the same choice. The cost of protection is now the equivalent of \$650 in Syrian pounds, a large amount for people struggling to make ends meet in a war zone. The other two options remain unchanged. This time the offer came from the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS), an extremist antigovernment group that seized Raqqa in May 2013 from more-moderate rebel brigades and declared the town the capital of its own Islamic state.

Most of Raqqa's 3,000 Christians had already fled the fighting, leaving just a few families in a place suddenly run by a group known for its violent tactics in both Iraq and Syria, including beheadings and floggings—tactics so ruthless that even al-Qaeda has disowned the group. The number had fallen even further by the time ISIS commanders promised the Christians that as long as they paid the levy, the one church that had not already been destroyed in the fighting would be left untouched and the Christians would not be physically harmed. They would have the right to practice their religion as long as they didn't ring bells, evangelize or pray within earshot of a Muslim.

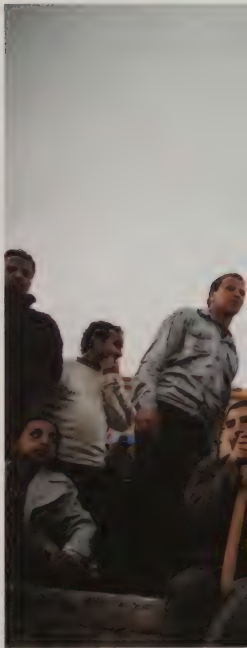
Church leaders urged Raqqa's Christians to pay the militants. "[ISIS] told me that all I need to do is pay the taxes, and they will protect me," says George, a 17-year-old Christian music student still living in Raqqa. "I know that under the Caliphate, Christians got a lot of things in return for paying taxes. The Christian community was left in peace." That hasn't been the case so far in Syria's new Caliphate. When ISIS arrived in town, it warned Christians to stay out of sight and hide their crucifixes.

There are no reported instances of ISIS militants physically harassing Christians, but the threat is palpable, says George, who asked to go by a pseudonym out of fear of reprisals. "They don't need to hit you," he says, speaking via Skype from his home in Raqqa. "They wound you with their words. It's how they look at my religion as if it's not real. With such utter contempt. As if the Bible is all made up." George says his family, which runs a small car-repair business, can't afford to leave. Their only hope of survival is to scrape together enough money to pay the twice-yearly tax. But he is not sure they will be able to pull it off, and they may be forced to flee—abandoning everything they have built up over the years.

The choices and compromises faced by the remaining Christians of Raqqa are extreme versions of the choices and compromises Christians have increasingly faced over the past decade across a Middle East roiled by an unprecedented period of war and revolution. Although now defunct regimes like those of Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak presided over nightmarish human-rights abuses, they tended to protect Christian minorities and kept much of the region relatively stable. Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the upheavals of the Arab Spring, some Arab countries have experimented with democracy, and without exception, Islamist parties have been successful at the polls. In Syria, a bloody civil war has resulted in conflict between many from the Sunni Muslim majority and the minority Christians, who have tended to side with the regime of Bashar Assad, a member of the Alawite Muslim minority. The turmoil in these countries has made many of the Middle East's Christians feel deeply concerned for their safety.

A New Exodus

WHEN GRANTED THE OPPORTUNITY, MANY Christians leave, as happened in Iraq. Nearly a million Christians fled the chaos after Saddam's fall from power in 2003 and a brutal insurgency that saw Islamists attack Christians and their churches, among other targets. Today only about 300,000 Christians remain in Iraq, living under a Shi'ite Islamist government. Other Christian communities in the Middle East have stuck with an old survival strategy, supporting authoritarian regimes in exchange for protection. In Egypt, the Coptic Pope has tacitly supported military dictatorship for decades and recently backed the leader of last year's



coup, former field marshal Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, for May's presidential election. In Syria, church leaders have tolerated 40 years of Assad family rule for fear of an Islamist alternative. Such self-preservation puts Christian leaders in the camp of strongmen who frequently use violence against their own people. In backing these authoritarian regimes, those leaders and their supporters have failed to help their countries develop into states where justice, the rule of law and tolerance are applied evenly, not just to the ruling sect and its allies.

Some Christians in Syria have defied church leaders and called for Assad's downfall, in the hope that fighting for the rights of all Syrians will strengthen the place of Syria's minorities in the future. "If Syria's



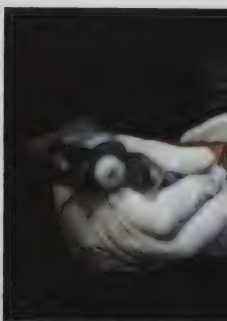
Mourning a leader Egyptian Christians wait outside a Cairo cathedral to see the body of Coptic Pope Shenouda III, who died in March 2012

Christians had sided with the revolution in the first place, standing, like Jesus, in solidarity with all those oppressed by the regime, I don't think we would be in this situation today," says Bassel, a novice Jesuit monk from Syria who recently left his order in part to protest its ongoing support for Assad. Bassel (using a pseudonym to protect family members still in Syria) says the revolution "could have succeeded. And we would be talking now about the right leader for Syria instead of having to choose between the radicals and the regime."

In the last census of the Ottoman era, conducted in 1914, Christians made up a quarter of the Middle East's population. Now they are less than 5%. Christians in the Middle East represent less than 1% of the world's Christians, but their declining numbers are of particular concern to the Vatican, which does not want to see the birthplace of Christianity devoid of the faithful, whether they be Catholic, Eastern Orthodox or members of other denominations. The departure of Christians also has consequences for the societies they leave behind. Tolerance of minorities is a powerful indicator of the future health of viable modern states. "We will not resign ourselves to imagining a Middle East without Christians," Pope Francis told regional

Christian leaders in November during a meeting at the Vatican.

But it may already be too late. If current demographic trends continue, the Middle East's population of 12 million Christians will be halved by 2020. While much of the decline can be attributed to opportunistic emigration and falling birth rates, political turmoil in the wake of the Arab Spring has accelerated the trend, say Christian commentators and analysts. At least 1 in 4 Syrian Christians, who made up 8% of the country's population in 1992, have left since the war started. An estimated 93,000 Copts left Egypt in the year following the 2011 revolution that toppled Mubarak, a secular-leaning Muslim strongman who made a point of protecting Egypt's



Christians during his 29 years in power as a way to gain legitimacy from the West. If the exodus is to be stanchied, Christians will have to astutely navigate a way between extremists and dictators.

Faustian Bargains

ON JULY 3, WITH HIS KHAKI SHIRT BRISTLING with military insignia, al-Sisi announced on Egyptian television that he had just overthrown the democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi, a former senior official of the Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt's two most important religious leaders flanked al-Sisi: Ahmed el-Tayeb, the moderate Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar Mosque, and Pope Tawadros II, head of Egypt's Coptic Church.

For Egypt's 8 million Christians, many of whom had prayed for God to deliver them from an Islamist government that threatened to write their rights out of the country's new constitution, the coup seemed little short of a miracle. Some hailed al-Sisi as a messiah. But their public celebration of the coup made other Christians worry that there would soon be a price to pay. It did not take long. Within days, the full brunt of the Islamists' rage over the coup was directed at Egypt's Christians in one of the worst spasms of communal violence the country has ever seen. Islamist mobs attacked 63 churches and ransacked Christian orphanages and businesses. In October, unknown gunmen opened fire on a wedding party at a Cairo

One people, under pressure From left, the funeral for four Egyptian Christians killed in a drive-by shooting; a young Copt has a tattoo of the late Pope Shenouda III put on his arm; visitors at the Monastery of Mar Girgis in Cairo

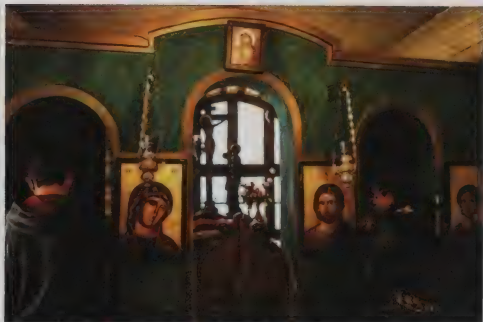
church, killing four, including an 8-year-old girl. "It felt like we were at war," says parishioner Nagah Sehata, who was in the church office when he heard the gunshots.

Al-Sisi will almost certainly win the presidential election in Egypt, which is due to take place on May 26 and 27. As Egypt prepares to vote in a man who could easily turn into the country's next military dictator—recent months have been marked by media suppression and crackdowns on almost all forms of dissent—Christians backing al-Sisi defend their choice. "If Egypt had not been saved by al-Sisi, you would have seen an exodus of all the Christians from Egypt," says Naguib Sawiris, a Christian and one of the country's most prominent businessmen. Majority rule in the Arab world leaves minorities at risk, says Sawiris, so better to support a secular-leaning coupmaker than risk annihilation by popularly elected Islamists.

That kind of thinking may preserve Christian interests in the short term, but it risks putting them on the wrong side of history, says Michael Wahid Hanna, a Middle East analyst at the Century Foundation, a New York City-based think tank. "Christians in the region are forced into these Faustian bargains in which they end

up supporting authoritarian regimes for fear of what the alternative would look like. But the price is that it can aggravate underlying sectarian tensions and create further animosities and bigotry." That leaves Christians even more vulnerable and thus more likely to defend the strongmen who abhor democratic change. And as the Arab Spring uprisings showed, even the most entrenched dictatorships can fall within days.

When the revolution of January 2011 gathered momentum, Egypt's Christians had every reason to be apprehensive. Under Mubarak, Christian leaders could expect patronage and protection from the oft raised threat of Islamic extremism in exchange for votes and political cover. So when, weeks later, tens of thousands of protesters began assembling in Cairo's Tahrir Square to call for Mubarak's ouster, the Coptic Church's head at the time, Pope Shenouda III, ordered Christians to stay home. Father Abdelmessiah Bassit, who leads the congregation at the Church of the Virgin Mary on the outskirts of Cairo, was one of the few priests who defied the directive. He now considers himself to have made an error of judgment. "Shenouda warned me that it would be an Islamic revolution, not an Egyptian revolution, and that it would destroy us," he says. "Shenouda was right." Little more than a year later, the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood was voted into power, led by Morsi, who, in an interview before the 2011 revolution, told TIME that a Christian would never be permitted to lead Egypt.



Under Morsi, physical assaults against Christian targets declined, but anti-Christian rhetoric rose in their place. Female Christian students were asked to wear veils on some university campuses, and churchgoers were forced to lower the volume of their services in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods. When the Islamist-controlled parliament rammed through a new constitution in December 2012 that effectively enshrined Islamic law above all else, Christians feared for their rights and identity. Bassit, regretting his early support for the revolution, urged his congregation to pray for Morsi's downfall. Al-Sisi's coup, he says, was God's answer.

If anything, Egypt's Copts are more closely intertwined with the military leadership than ever before, a risky state of affairs, says Christian columnist Theresa Moussa. Allowing with strongmen only keeps Christians weak. Instead, she says, Christians need to stop seeking favors and support the rule of law by backing a presidential candidate who shares their values. "Our strength can only come from a state that respects our rights and the rights of everyone else—women, Christians and Muslims—equally."

Destruction of History

FATHER NADIM NASSAR, AN ANGLICAN priest from Syria who now lives in London, stays in regular contact with Syrian Christians as part of his work with an interfaith nongovernmental organization. The stories and rumors he hears from Syria shock

him. "For the first time in modern history, we are being persecuted for our faith," says Nasser, who left Syria more than a decade ago. While YouTube is full of horrific videos purporting to show Christians being beheaded, attacked and, in one gruesome case, even crucified, most have been debunked as regime propaganda passing off Alawite victims as Christians to try to earn Western sympathy. As with most videos and rumors coming out of Syria, little can be verified.

That has not stopped Christians from fleeing in terror. And the exodus may grow in the wake of the killing on April 7 of Father Frans van der Lugt, the Dutch head of a Jesuit monastery and the last foreign religious leader in the western city of Homs. It is not yet clear whether his death was at the hands of the rebels or the regime, which controls most of the area. No one has claimed responsibility, and each side accuses the other, augmenting the Christians' sense of insecurity.

Although he is no supporter of the regime, Samir, a 29-year-old Syrian Christian trader who splits his time between Damascus and the Gulf, believes that if Assad were to fall, it would prove a catastrophe for the country's Christians. "They won't be singled out and slaughtered, at least not in most places," he says, speaking by phone from Dubai. (He asked to go by a shortened name to protect his identity.) "But if Islamists come to power, Christians are doomed. Islamists will make it unbearable for them to live in Syria, so they will have

to look elsewhere. The only thing that will really keep Christians in the Middle East is secular regimes. Of course, it's better if they have popular backing, but what is worse—a dictator or an Islamic theocracy?"

Christians may simply not survive the Arab revolutions. Backing tyrants may buy them some time, but many Christian commentators believe that the only way these communities can guarantee their continued presence in the region is by pushing for the rights of others as much as for their own. In Egypt, they note, Christians can still help build the kind of society that will protect their numbers down the line—but only as long as al-Sisi doesn't turn into a dictator or if Christians turn against him if he does.

In Syria, it may be too late. The chasm that has opened there between Christians and Sunni Muslims is vast. "Of course, as believers we should be standing up for the rights of all Syrians, no matter who they are," says Samir, the trader. "But what if at the end of the day it backfires and our 2,000-year-old presence in this country is destroyed?" To the former Jesuit novice Bassel, the answer can be found in Scripture. He asks, "What is the point of having Christians in the Middle East 100 years from now if we are not acting as Christians in practice—standing up for the oppressed, the downtrodden and the poor?" —WITH REPORTING BY HANIA MOURTADA/BEIRUT, ASHRAF KHALIL AND HASSAN ELNAGGAR/CAIRO AND KARL VICK/JERUSALEM ■

And, unfortunately,
Missy knows
everywhere. She
knows where
you're going to
be. And she's
going to be there.
And she's going to be
there. And she's
going to be there.



FED BY STARS AND POWERED BY VIDEO. A

STARTUP BOOM IN WEST LOS ANGELES IS

...A SECOND HIGH-TECH MEC

BY KATE PICKERT

GONE TO THE BEACH

THE SECOND-FLOOR OFFICE OF TRADESY, A 16-month-old online consignment shop, has all the requisite trappings of a digital startup. Inside an open, loftlike space, seven 20-somethings work at a central pod of desks near an L-shaped kitchen stocked with free snacks and drinks. Employees' dogs scamper beneath their feet while a team of programmers, eyes glued to computer screens, huddles in a separate room.

But there is a giveaway clue that Tradesy isn't based in Silicon Valley or one of the dozens of other tech hubs that have taken root from Austin to Omaha: a deck off the kitchen is piled with surfboards. From there, the Pacific Ocean and the wide white-sand beach of Santa Monica, Calif., is about 300 yards away—easy walking distance when the waves are breaking.

"We have two things we hold dear here," says Tradesy co-founder and CEO Tracy DiNunzio, 35. "Catered food delivered for all meals and being close to the ocean."

Such is life in Silicon Beach, a stretch of roughly four miles from Venice to Santa Monica that has become the heart of Los Angeles' fast-growing tech scene. Thanks in part to Hollywood's proximity and a climate that sells itself, there are some 800 startups in the area that have attracted about \$1.3 billion in venture capital since 2011, according to a report from PricewaterhouseCoopers and the National Venture Capital Association. Silicon Beach's ranks

include social-media companies like Whisper and Snapchat, which reportedly turned down a \$3 billion acquisition offer from Facebook in 2013. And that's not the only attention the area has drawn from its namesake 400 miles to the north. Google occupies 100,000 sq. ft. of Venice office space, including some in the iconic Frank Gehry-designed Binoculars Building. Facebook opened an office in nearby Playa Vista in 2012.

All this has helped turn a patch of sun-soaked coast better known for beachfront promenading into an unexpected model of growth for the new digital economy. A 2012 report from the business-data organization Compass ranked L.A. as the third largest tech ecosystem in the world, behind only Silicon Valley and Tel Aviv. And as startups multiply along the Pacific Coast Highway, developers have scrambled to meet the surging demand for housing and office space and the increasingly high prices they command.

Silicon Valley still dwarfs all other domestic tech sectors—Internet companies in and around Palo Alto drew \$3 billion in venture capital last year alone—but the explosive growth of Silicon Beach is the latest sign that some of the features that lured tech companies to Northern California are beginning to be replicated elsewhere. Innovations in open-source software and cloud storage make launching a tech company anywhere easier and cheaper than ever.

"There's all this stuff I can take off the shelf that used to require hundreds and hundreds of people," says Michael Heyward, the 26-year-old CEO of Whisper, an app that allows users to post anonymous messages on a social network. The company, which just leased a 14,000-sq.-ft. Venice home once owned by Anjelica Huston, raised more than \$20 million in venture capital last year. "I think great companies can get funded anywhere," says Heyward. "Silicon Valley does not have a monopoly on good ideas."

Entrepreneurs across the U.S. are putting that notion to the test, launching startups in the mountains of Provo, Utah, and the Midwestern plains. Being outside the Bay Area echo chamber, they say, helps keep them in touch with the broader culture. And if that perspective comes with a bike ride to work along the Venice Beach boardwalk, who's to complain?

The Video Economy

OF COURSE, LOS ANGELES IS A COMPANY town too. The difference is that far from being an obstacle, the entertainment business presents an opportunity for local startups. "Everybody in Hollywood has an app," says Adam Lilling, a venture capitalist and a co-founder of Launchpad LA, which provides workspace and mentorship to early-stage tech companies. "The app is the new script."

Indeed, for celebrities, a tech venture is the latest must-have accessory. Actress Jessica Alba co-founded one of Silicon Beach's hottest e-commerce businesses, the Honest Co., which sells eco-friendly baby and household products. BeachMint, another Santa Monica-based e-commerce startup, has partnered with actresses Kate Bosworth and Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen to design and curate some of its fashion offerings. JustFab and ShoeDazzle, two L.A.-based e-commerce sites that hawk shoes and accessories, recently merged. JustFab's president is celebrity fashion executive Kimora Lee Simmons, and ShoeDazzle was co-founded by Kim Kardashian.

Hollywood's technical expertise is also providing the talent for another growth sector: digital video content and production. Dana Settle, a founding partner at the venture-capital fund Greycroft Partners, says video-related startups in Silicon Beach allow innovators trained in television and movie production to have "the chance to be creative on their own terms." One company in Settle's portfolio



Board meeting Snapchat co-founders Evan Spiegel and Bobby Murphy on the Venice boardwalk

is Maker Studios, a production house based in Culver City, just east of Venice, that makes custom YouTube videos for clients. BuzzFeed, the venture-capital-backed new-media outlet, opened an office in West Hollywood in 2012 to grow the company's online-video arm. And Amazon, Netflix and YouTube have recently moved into large production and office spaces on the west side of L.A., in part to make video content outside the traditional network-television system.

"There will be very meaningful new companies built around video, and it's more likely they will be built in L.A. than anywhere else," says Nate Redmond, managing partner of Rustic Canyon, a venture-capital fund based in Santa Monica.

North vs. South

OF ALL THE NEW TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES in Silicon Beach, the best known may be Snapchat, the 2½-year-old Venice-based photo-sharing app that claims to transmit some 400 million messages a day.

Evan Spiegel, the company's 23-year-old CEO, says working outside Silicon Valley helps him stay attuned to emerging trends and fickle consumer preferences—which, in Snapchat's case, translated into a product built around the desire to give the younger generation of digital natives more anonymity online. Photos sent via Snapchat self-destruct after a certain period of time.

"Being here and hearing about lots of things besides technology helps inspire us

to make things," says Spiegel. "Snapchat really responds to the emotional components of communication." It's a sentiment DiNunzio, the Tradesy CEO, shares. "I love San Francisco, but living there doesn't give you a sense of what average people are doing with technology," she says.

And while not everyone in West L.A. might qualify as "average," it's logical that many Silicon Beach companies target the mass market. In L.A., startups with products designed for consumers outnumber those marketed to other businesses by a ratio of 4 to 1. In Silicon Valley, which is loaded with software companies, the ratio is 1 to 2. "Silicon Valley is kind of insular, self-referential and inward-looking," says Jeremy Liew, a partner at Lightspeed Venture Partners, a fund that has invested in Whisper and Snapchat. "It's not in touch with the mass market and Middle America."

Although mainstream culture may be more accessible outside Silicon Valley, most of the money needed to produce new technology products still lives there. Lightspeed is based in Menlo Park, near other major venture funds. DiNunzio says she regularly travels to the Bay Area to meet with potential investors and recruit the talent needed to transform her startup into a large and profitable enterprise. "It takes a smaller technical team to launch a product," says Greycroft's Settle. "But it will always take a massive technical effort to launch a business."

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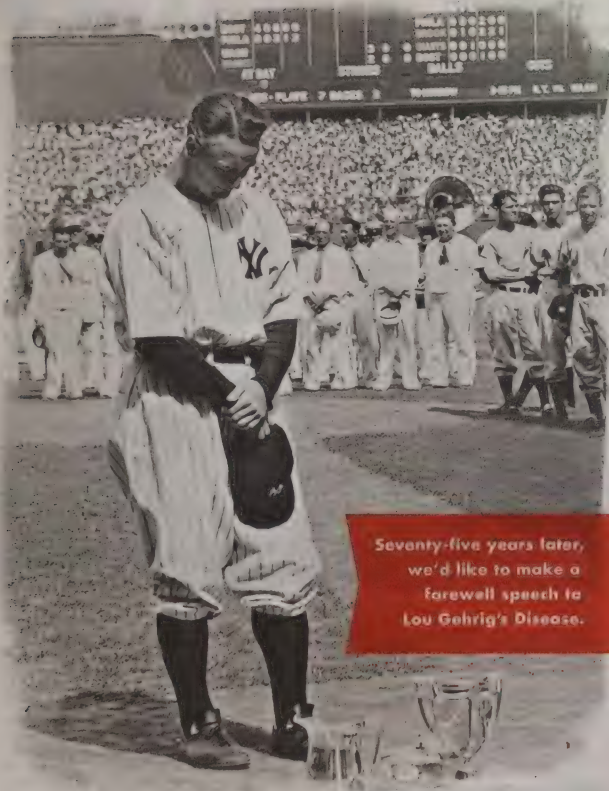


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ALS
ASSOCIATION

THE WEEK
WE FINALLY GET
UPDATES ON THE

The Culture



TELEVISION

Yeah, You Betcha

Adapting an Oscar-winning Coen brothers film for television is a big risk, but FX's original series *Fargo*, premiering April 15, boasts a pedigree to rival its big-screen predecessor. With Joel and Ethan Coen executive producing, the cast includes Billy Bob



Billy Bob Thornton is up to no good as Lorne Malvo in the new FX series *Fargo*.

Thornton as a sinister hit man and Martin Freeman playing a down-on-his-luck insurance salesman, plus Bob Odenkirk—best known as Saul from *Breaking Bad*—switching sides as a deputy. In its prime-time incarnation, *Fargo* revisits the snow-caked Minnesota landscape made familiar by the film, spinning an all-new yarn of violence and vitriol colliding with small-town values. Stay warm out there.

TELEVISION

Witty Hurts

MTV's razor-sharp, keenly observed high school comedy *Awkward.* returns April 15 for another season of snappy dialogue and teen heartache. In the words of the scene-stealing Sadie Saxon: "You're welcome."



MUSIC

Piece of Cake

After "Roar" and "Dark Horse," Katy Perry continues releasing radio candy with her infectious new *Prism* single "Birthday." The celebratory track is breezy and disco-inflected—a sweet sing-along treat primed for summer.



MOVIES

Come to Brazil

Your kids may drag you to *Rio 2*, a sequel to the 2011 rain-forest-set blockbuster, but an all-star cast of voice actors from Anne Hathaway to Will.i.am makes this rumble in the jungle, opening April 18, well worth the trip.



By Sam Lansky

King of the Imperial Blaster Beat. Skrillex is making a big noise in the pop world

By Jens Erik Gould

ON A RECENT MARCH AFTERNOON, SONNY Moore bounced through the front door of his loft turned music studio knowing he had something good up his sleeve. The electronic-dance-music producer had just released an official app to his fans that appeared to be no more than a mobile video game called *Alien Ride*, pitting players against flying asteroids. Yet ominously, the top of the game screen displayed a timer frozen at 72:00:00. It soon began counting down, foreshadowing something significant. "This is suspicious, man," read one of a flurry of comments in a fan chat room. "What does it mean?!!?!" asked another.

What it meant was that Moore, better known as Skrillex, was hours away from releasing his most extensive record to date. When the clock expired, the app unlocked songs from *Recess* every half hour—a full week before the record went on sale. With that unlocking three days away, Skrillex headquarters was working hard to keep a lid on the mystery that fans were trying diligently to solve. Meanwhile, Moore, sporting a black-and-white-striped shirt, his signature black, fat-rimmed glasses and half-shaved hairdo, was in a state of cheerful anticipation and couldn't decide whether to stand up or sit down. "The kids feel like something's coming right now, so they're excited," he said, grinning.

At this point in his career, Moore doesn't need to rely on unconventional marketing to sell records. Yet he's always enjoyed bypassing industry middlemen

to reach his fans directly, and this was his most elaborate scheme yet. When he gave away his pioneering debut release, *My Name Is Skrillex*, as a free download in 2010, it helped propel him from unknown DJ to winner of six Grammys, praise from the biggest names in dance and hip-hop and even a personal invitation to Africa alongside Bono. A regular iTunes release wouldn't have been any fun for Moore because it wouldn't have pushed the envelope. That constant drive to create something novel is perhaps Moore's greatest asset, and it's why he's become the avatar of electronic dance music in America.

To uninitiated, often older music fans, Skrillex's melodies might sound like imperial storm troopers firing blaster rifles over the din of convulsing drumbeats and bass lines that feel like a pit-of-your-stomach free fall from the top floor of a skyscraper. To those more familiar

Might as well jump Skrillex grew up a short punk-rock kid with bad skin, which has inspired him to embrace fans with social anxieties

with the electronic-dance world, there's an obvious comparison to the British dance genre dubstep, which combines half-time drumbeats with sub-bass frequencies. But further dissection of Skrillex reveals a complex web of musical elements, including electro, progressive house, hip-hop, reggae and even rock. The amalgamation makes for a nonstop, heart-pounding live show that healthy hearing and dry T-shirts are hard-pressed to survive. In that vein, Skrillex recently announced his latest batch of summer festival and amphitheater tour dates following an upcoming gig at California's premier festival, Coachella.

The new record is proof that Moore's concoctions translate well to the studio too. While it retains the in-your-face assault of previous efforts, *Recess* also takes more chances. It features guest appearances by musicians as varied as Passion Pit's Michael Angelakos and Chance the Rapper, whose chorus on "Coast Is Clear" asks a question too lewd to be repeated here. Sections of "Stranger" feature pretty vocals that could pass for experimental indie rock, while the final track, "Fire Away," offers piano riffs and a lonely, almost jazzy feel. "The stuff that's explosive and loud is supercrazy," Moore says in rapid-fire speech that barely clears his mouth before his next thoughts become words. "The last song sets a whole

'I want to give back to those uncool kids who are passionate and feel like they don't have a place. That's where I came from.'

—SKRILLEX



different mood that I don't even think I've touched melodically."

Like anyone out to shift artistic paradigms, Moore has attracted his fair share of skeptics. Dubstep purists have condemned what they call an American bastardization of their genre, disparagingly labeling it "brostep." The criticism disturbed Moore at first, but he says he now sees it as further evidence of his originality, and he even pokes fun at it by titling a new track "All Is Fair in Love and Brostep."

Moore brings a distinct lack of pretentiousness to his work. Quick to give tribute to his musical forefathers, he can excitedly recount the big break he once got from producer Deadmau5 as if it were happening in real time. While Moore certainly has the money to seclude himself in the Hollywood Hills and fly around the world in a private jet, he still lives and skateboards in downtown L.A. His Grammy awards sit on a corner bookshelf in his modest loft, sharing space with abundant collections of alien figurines and black hoodies.

Skrillex's melting pot of diverse genres has fueled exponential growth of his fan base. As a teenager, he was front man for a post-hardcore punk band. From *First to Last*, a link that now helps bring rock and emo kids into the electronic-dance-music fold. He's also helped extend bridges to metal, hip-hop and pop artists.

As important as those elements are to his strong following, the close relationship he cultivates with his audience may go even further. Growing up in Los Angeles and San Francisco, Moore was often mocked for his bad skin, short stature and unique musical preferences. He's been open to talking about the emotional fallout from this, making him a safe conduit for fans to express their own anxieties. Kids with suicidal thoughts have reached out to him online, girls struggling with anorexia send him notes, and he has answered them. "I'm a short kid, so it's that underdog mentality," he says. "I want to give back to those uncool kids, the punk-rock kids who are passionate and feel like they don't have a place. That's where I came from."

Skrillex's magnanimous personality has also spawned a management crew that behaves like friends joined at the hip. "He wants to take people on an adventure, a journey," says his longtime manager, Tim Smith. "It's kind of magical. You just want to be a part of what he's doing." His fans do too. They threw so much IT support behind a popular effort to decipher the *Alien Ride* mystery that a fan ended up cracking the app's code and revealing the album plans just hours before release. Skrillex was honored that they cared enough to figure it out. "No one's really taking themselves too seriously," he says. "This music is supposed to be fun." ■

Buzzworthy Pop embraces a dirty new sound

Khhhhh. Zsst. Shrrm. Hear that? They're sounds that never used to be heard in pop music, at least not intentionally: the crunch of digital distortion, of speaker cones fluttering helplessly under seismic bass assaults and drums turned up so high they sound like tearing cardboard. And now that guttural, grinding sound is crawling up the charts.

Exhibit A in this new dissonance is a song that just became the longest-running entry in the history of *Billboard* magazine's Hot 100 singles. With 83 weeks on the list as of this writing, Imagine Dragons' slowly jackhammering rock song "Radioactive" has passed LeAnn Rimes' "How Do I Live," which previously held the "longest charting" title for over a decade. It also eclipsed the 76-week record for longevity set by Jason Mraz's "I'm Yours."

Both Rimes' and Mraz's songs have the lush, sparkly sonics associated with huge hits. "Radioactive" starts out the same way, with chiming guitars and airy vocal harmonies, but then its rhythm section kicks in: the wub-wub-wub bass tone of the underground dance music known as dubstep and a splattery, unmistakably distorted beat. It's working: Imagine Dragons was the best-selling American rock band of 2013, with over 6 million digital copies of "Radioactive" sold. The song also took Best Rock Performance at this year's Grammy Awards.

Right behind "Radioactive," with 79 weeks in the Hot 100, is one of the oddest recordings ever to become a pop hit. "Sail" by AWOLNATION is a crawlingly paced industrial-rock meditation on self-obliteration, built around a mammoth bass buzz and front man Aaron Bruno's shredded bellow. It couldn't sound less like Mraz, but that's the democracy of pop at work: the audience knows what it needs, and "Sail" has clawed out its territory on the radio in one city after another.

Two turntables and a microphone Skrillex's live shows combine electronic beats and rock energy





A decade ago, these sounds were the province of a few adventurous artists, iconoclasts eager to show how uncommercial their work was; later they filtered into the tool kits of hip-hop and dance-music producers. An effect called *bitcrusher*, which makes audio more lo-fi, is now a standard option in music software. Noise has become to popular music what civet is to perfume: the nasty stuff that perks up everything else. The singer-producer Miguel has made distorted, pixelated instrumentation a cornerstone of his work, mostly in ways that make singers' voices sound more naturally elegant: the sludgy air-in-a-paper-bag beats of Mariah Carey's "#Beautiful," the Bronx-cheer bass of J. Cole's "Power Trip," the overdriven

tippy-tap drum machine of his own "Adorn." Zendaya's recent platinum single "Replay" similarly contrasts the clarity of her voice with raspy, rattling dubstep electronics. Eminem's "Berzerk" was constructed to re-establish his bona fides as a loose cannon. Its chorus and verses are slightly out of tune with each other, and its rock-guitar snippets tone-bend at their edges as if they're on a cassette or vinyl record that's being sloppily started and stopped. "Black Skinhead," the lead single from Kanye West's megalomaniacal album *Yeezus*, opens with overdriven, muted harmonies, and nearly every other element of its recording crackles as if it's been cranked so high that it's shattering whatever sound system it's

coming out of, no matter how quietly you're actually playing it. In addition to dubstep, the other big distortion influencer in underground music has been trap, a subgenre that came out of Southern hip-hop and expanded into dance music. Jay Z's "Tom Ford," with its cracked 8-bit electronics and rolling high hats, is a take on the trap sound, while "Turn Down for What" by DJ Snake and Lil Jon is a trap-dubstep hybrid built around a single slammed bass tone while Lil Jon abrasively barks the title. Listen carefully and you can hear noise sneaking into songs that seem otherwise perfectly coiffed. The beat of Katy Perry's massive 2010 hit "Firework" breaks up around its fringes. "It's as plain as day that something went dreadfully

wrong in the recording process, or dreadfully right if that's what the market wants," sniffed the audiophile site *Audio Masterclass*. Sandy Vee, who co-produced "Firework," explained that he likes to add distortion. "It creates more warmth, more aliveness... For me dirty means warmer." It can mean that, certainly. But dirty sounds are also an illusion meant to enhance the way we listen to music now—at low volume, trickling out of little computer speakers or earbuds. They imply that the music they belong to is being played loudly, even when it isn't. Distortion is the sound of things on the verge of falling apart. Right now, the collapse it's signaling might be pop music as we know it. —DOUGLAS WOLK

Art

Ghosts in the Machine. Canada builds a new city that brings old Vancouver back to life

By Lily Rothman

THERE'S A TIME MACHINE IN VANCOUVER. IT'S a white box, 9 ft. high and 12 ft. wide, in a nondescript back room at the office of a publicly funded agency that one wouldn't normally associate with science fiction. Step inside and you're transported to the city's past—1948 or thereabouts—able to explore a now razed neighborhood or a hotel demolished decades ago. No helmet or space suit is required. On April 23, you'll be able to travel through space as well as time, when the machine opens to the public as part of the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City.

To be fair, this time machine doesn't actually send you back in time, but it's almost as cool as if it did. The box in question is part of *Circa 1948*, an interactive art installation created by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and artist Stan Douglas, who wanted to explore that tumultuous postwar period, when soldiers returned to a city facing a housing crisis and a burst of gentrification that threatened an older way of life. "I'm always looking at transitional moments in history, events with a capital E," says Douglas, an award-winning Vancouverite whose work is in major museums around the world.

There are plenty of ways to visit the moment in question. Douglas and the NFB Digital Studio—led by Loc Dao, executive producer and "creative technologist"—will present the interactive installation at Tribeca's second annual "Storyscapes" program, a four-day focus on cutting-edge work. (It opens at the tail end of the festival, which runs from April 16 to 27 this year.) There's also an app for the iPad and iPhone, as well as a website, both of which launch April 22.

It's too early to say whether right now is a transitional moment in history, but something's up in the realm of film and technology. Moving pictures and linear plots have long dominated storytelling; they're now ceding ground to new ideas like virtual reality and the kind of interactivity that used to be just for video games. With what may be its most ambitious project to date, the NFB—which celebrates its 75th birthday in May—is at the center of that transition.

Here's how *Circa 1948*'s not-an-actual-time-machine works. After exhaustive research into Vancouver's history, Douglas unearthed a trove of blueprints, maps and photographs that were traced by the NFB team into Maya, software that turned them into explorable 3-D renders that are meticulous re-creations of history. They're photorealistic—detailed enough for the doors to have hinges—with varying resolutions used for each of the project's different incarnations. The images can be small enough not to slow down your phone as you navigate through an old streetscape with the swipe of a finger—or big enough to seem real when you step into the full-body interactive experience. In the latter, each corner of the 12-ft.-wide frame is home to a Kinect camera array—the gadget best known for allowing gamers to do things like play virtual tennis—that detects the user's position and adjusts the visuals accordingly. Take a step forward and the projections on the box's walls move too.

But Douglas' creation is no game; it's a story, with characters and a plot. When you pause on a street corner or in a hotel lobby, certain locations trigger dialogue; the experience is more like eavesdropping than watching a movie. The snippets of conversation tie together the plot, but there's no right order in which to experience it, so Douglas describes it as "recombinant." (At Tribeca, in an April 22 live presentation, Douglas will walk viewers through one possible track.) Meanwhile, in a different format but using the same research, Douglas conceived a play, *Helen Lawrence*, which premiered in Vancouver in March and uses 3-D projections of those worlds instead of sets. In yet another incarnation, at Vancouver's Presentation House Gallery, he's exhibiting a still from the renderings the way one would a photo.

"Anyone working in interactive storytelling follows the NFB because their interactive digital studio has been doing such incredible work," says Ingrid Kopp, Tribeca's director of digital initiatives. "When I heard that Stan Douglas was involved, that was doubly exciting."

Arranging all of these moving parts has been

Stan Douglas, left, with Loc Dao, holds the iPad version of *Circa 1948*, which reimagines postwar Vancouver in virtual images





A lost world, found At left, a historical look at Vancouver's Hogan's Alley, a poor neighborhood razed in the 1960s; at right, a 3-D rendering of the same area as seen in the *Circa* 1948 project

a big task for Douglas and the NFB, but not out of character. Just as *Circa* is a meticulously created replica of Vancouver in 1948, rendered so it can be seen from infinite angles, Douglas' work previously has included mural-size photos that contain what can seem like infinite details. One example, *Abbott and Cordova*, 7 August 1971, captures a staged re-creation of a riot that took place at the intersection where the NFB's office in Vancouver is housed; it now hangs in that very building's atrium. Douglas describes such locations as "psycho-geographic places." Similarly, the connection between past and present is central to the meaning and experience of *Circa* 1948.

Dao, who served as producer and co-creator of *Circa* 1948, and whose office is full of awards for his studio's digital work, has spearheaded a long run of groundbreaking projects. In one recent example, *Bear 71*, his team created an interactive documentary by combining a voice-over with actual surveillance footage of a tagged wild grizzly; in 2013, it scored a Webby Award for Best NetArt. "Every project we do, we learn something new," he says, "and we try to experiment with at least one new thing, working with story and form and technology."

But when it comes to *Circa*, one form appears to be missing. Which raises a question: If the National Film Board made *Circa* possible and the Tribeca Film Festival is premiering the interactive element, where's the film?

The answer to that question may not matter. More and more, as *Circa* shows, medium is subservient to story. Just as Douglas sees himself as a no-qualifiers-

needed artist, rather than a specialist in any particular way of making art, it's hard to even pin down what to call the medium in question. Each component of *Circa* lives in a landscape with a lexicon, but the words for the experience of the "storyworld" as a whole are still up for debate. As a wide range of media-consumption experiences migrate online or to mobile, that vocabulary is becoming more and more necessary. It's not that all media have become singular—not every story is meant to be a 3-D app—but that the lines between them, even on the production and funding side, are blurring.

"I don't think it's accident that there's more slippage," says Tribeca's Kopp. "One of the things that's really exciting about this storytelling space is the collaboration across what used to be fairly solid disciplines."

The slippage continues apace.

Virtual reality is having a moment, with Facebook's recent blockbuster purchase of the company that makes the Oculus Rift, but Dao and the NFB predict that storytelling's next move will go beyond wearables to a world where we experience that unreal reality without a device between us and the content. "We hope we'll get to a time where technology is transparent in storytelling," he says. "This is our step in that direction."

That hope explains why Canada's

Parliament pays for the development of something as esoteric as an experimental, recombinant, interactive, 3-D, real-time world: this trip to the past is a glimpse at the future, a way to figure out how it works before it arrives.

It's hard to calculate the cost of something like *Circa*, since much of the work is done by salaried employees, but its overall budget was about \$850,000 Canadian. (The agency usually budgets up to \$1.4 million per film and up to \$560,000 for an interactive project.) Michelle van Beusekom, the acting general director of NFB's English program, compares that investment to R&D at a science lab: the work may seem indulgent, but it can lead to practical discoveries.

The NFB's mandate specifies a degree of social relevance for its work—the project must represent Canadians or help them understand their world—but there's also economic motivation. As van Beusekom points out, commercial filmmaking enterprises often can't afford to experiment with things like "transparent" virtual reality, but public funding provides the luxury of allowing new experimentation with every project. If the NFB and its safety net can make this work, then Canada's for-profit film industry can use those discoveries too.

And then there's the other reason for Canada's citizens to invest in *Circa* 1948, the same reason anyone would want a time machine: to use it. "It's selfish," Douglas says. "I want to experience it myself. I want to experience midcentury Vancouver, this period of transformation—and so I worked with others to make that reality."

Tuned In



The Dave Dilemma. Want to be the next Letterman? Don't take his old job

By James Poniewozik

TO: Jon, Stephen, Chelsea, Craig et al.

FROM: Your pretend agent

RE: The *Late Show* job

Sorry I've been hard to reach—the phone's been ringing off the hook here. On April 3, David Letterman announced that he was retiring from CBS's *Late Show* next year. Dave had barely cut to commercial when the names started flying. Your names. Other names. Changing of the guard, new generation, blah blah blah. Drama! Intrigue! Excitement! I may have to hire a new pretend assistant.

Bottom line: one of you, at some point, is going to be offered a life-changing opportunity, the chance to replace Dave and be the next face of CBS at 11:35 p.m.

Don't take it.

I'm telling you this, heart to heart, as your pretend agent, because your real agents probably won't. Why would they? CBS is going to back up a money truck. Well, more like a money van—late-night is not pulling in the dollars it used to—but still, they'll tell you, you would be crazy not to take that job.

Which would be true. If the job still existed. I don't just mean that late-night shows—despite the disproportionate media attention to the musical chairs—don't have the reach they used to. Johnny Carson got 15 million viewers a night; now Jimmy Fallon averages 4.3 million and NBC throws confetti.

But beyond that, Dave's job was what it was because Dave created a new thing. On *Late Night* in 1982, he and head writer Merrill Markoe launched a show that embraced television by rebelling against it: ambushing the *Today* show with a bullhorn, strapping a camera to a monkey, making a folk hero of angry graphic novelist Harvey Pekar. He made TV with a message—namely, Can you believe we're doing this on TV?

Dave was an original. Your names are being thrown out there because you're originals. If one of you takes over *Late Show*, you might do fine. (Dave's ratings have been meager enough lately that you'll have a nice low bar to clear.) But you won't be able to make a truly original creation, because *Late Show* is now an institution. Institutions have expectations, constituencies and targets to meet. Steve Jobs didn't change his business by becoming CEO of IBM.

In today's media, bigger isn't automatically better. **Jon Stewart**: without the benefit of the big networks, you made *The Daily Show*'s fake newscast into a

laser-sighted commentary on politics and the media, unafraid to take sides and call BS. You think you'd get to do that on CBS? Your bosses will be watching the ratings for Fallon's *Tonight*, where he just invited Sarah Palin on to play the flute.

Likewise, **Stephen Colbert**: you'd be robbing your audience and yourself, leaving your performance art behind to be a network glad-hander. **Chelsea Handler**: you hosted for years at E!—and, yes, it's long since time for a woman—but that job would sand down your raw edges beyond recognition. **Craig Ferguson**: you're nominally next in line, but your quirky, thoughtful conversations would be squashed into the 11:35 celeb-promotion machine like haggis onto a McDonald's bun. **Ellen DeGeneres**: you'd be a natural, but don't let anyone fool you that this job is better than the one you have just because it follows the news at 11.

Louis CK, a smart comedian who's also smart about the business of being a comedian, gamified this all out on his FX show *Louie* in 2012. His character, a fictionalized version of himself, is lured with the prospect of taking over for Letterman and goes through the grueling work of adapting his edgy comedy to the rigid format—though, in the end, Letterman re-ups and Louie gets nothing. He's stronger for becoming the kind of person who could get the job, yet *not* getting it is the best thing that could happen to him.

O.K., **Conan O'Brien**, **Arsenio Hall**, **Jimmy Kimmel**: you guys are already in late-night, and if CBS writes you a big check to make a lateral move, mazel tov. But if anyone truly wants to become the next David Letterman, they won't do it by becoming the last David Letterman. An 11:35 p.m. show on CBS is not the place for someone who dreams of reinventing the wheel. It's for someone who likes the wheel and doesn't mind watching it spin in place, over and over, for years. CBS will find that person, and it'll be better for everyone.

Speaking of which: Anyone have Jay's number?

James Poniewozik, YOUR PRETEND AGENT

Pop Chart

Love
it

Janelle Monáe performed together on opposite coasts, thanks to hologram technology (sponsored by Audi).



Captain America: The Winter Soldier debuted in the U.S. with \$96.2 million, smashing the April opening-weekend record. Your move, Spider-Man!

To celebrate National Peanut Butter & Jelly Day—yes, it's a thing—a group of California students created a 51-ft. sandwich from 30 lb. of spread and 16 jars of jelly.



Honey Maid printed out hundreds of hateful comments on its ads featuring gay and interracial couples and asked artists to arrange them into a sculpture promoting love.

THE DIGITS

316 m.p.h.

QUICK TALK

Rashida Jones

The actress left her role on *Parks and Recreation* earlier this season, but fans can catch her on the big screen in *Cuban Fury*, out April 11. In the British comedy, Jones, 38, plays a salsa-dancing corporate manager whose suitors woo her on the dance floor. —LILY ROTHMAN

How were you as a dancer before you took on this project? I would call myself a dance enthusiast, which doesn't necessarily mean I was all that skilled. **What's your signature move?** In salsa or in life? **In life.** I don't have, like, the worm. Maybe it's the electric slide. **Which is pretty much the best dance ever.** It's underrated, and it gets people involved immediately. **People can make fun of it all they want...** But they shouldn't. My whole family [her dad is music icon Quincy Jones] does the electric slide. Every time we get together, it ends up happening. Somebody starts it. **Even in a restaurant or something?** We try to limit it to open spaces. **There's also a great mixtape plot in this movie.** Were you a big mixtape maker, back when that was a thing? Oh, my God, yes. I still have all of my mixtapes that I made for myself and that were made for me by boyfriends and friends in high school. **Did you ever use one to tell someone you liked him?** Totally. And my first mixtape was given to me by my first kiss, and it was the first time I'd ever heard rock. I grew up with jazz and R&B and a little bit of pop. He had Cream and Led Zeppelin and all these other things I'd never heard before. **Did you like it?** I did. Well, I liked him a lot. That probably was part of it.

“I came to like it because I love him.”

» *The End of Men*, by Hanna Rosin “I’m kind of obsessed with modern relationships.”

» *Morning Phase*, by Beck “Every single album he’s made is great. I love him.”



Speed at which a human would have to travel to actually come in “like a wrecking ball,” as Milley Cyrus sings in her heartbreak power ballad. Researchers point out that attempting this would likely result in serious injury.

VERBATIM

“Hello, I am away until 01/01/2070.”

TILDA SWINTON, in her email auto-reply, as revealed in a *New York* feature about the allure of the actress's enigmatic persona

ROUNDUP Hot Wheels

Las Vegas's new High Roller may be the tallest observation wheel in the world—soaring past the London Eye and China's Star of Nanchang—but its rivals are circling: the New York Wheel (630 ft.) and Dubai Eye (689 ft.) are both racing to open by 2016 and claim the title. Of course, big-wheel history is fraught with this kind of friendly competition. Here, a look at some of its highest-profile players.

550 FT.



THE HIGH ROLLER (Las Vegas)

Built by Caesars Entertainment, it boasts 28 cabins, which can hold 40 passengers each, and travels at one foot per second. A full rotation takes roughly 30 minutes.



INK OUTSIDE THE BOX Most of the classic inkblots in the Rorschach test—a psychological exam in which subjects interpret abstract blobs—are black and white. But the late German artist Sigmar Polke's untitled take on them, above, is full of color, and just like the Rorschach blots, it encourages viewers to think twice about what they're seeing. That ability to subvert expectations is a hallmark of Polke's work. A survey of his decades-long career opens on April 19 at New York City's Museum of Modern Art.

THE FERRIS WHEEL (Chicago)

Designed by engineer George Ferris, the first rideable wheel was the biggest attraction at the 1893 World's Fair. After making an appearance at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, it was demolished in 1906.



212 FT.



156 FT.

WIENER RIESENRAD (Vienna)

Its name means "Viennese giant wheel" in English. Erected in 1897 in Vienna's Prater, it appears to be the oldest wheel still operating. It managed to remain standing during World War II but was rehabbed after a 1944 fire destroyed the cables and cars.

FERRIS WHEEL AT ALEM ENTERTAINMENT CENTER (Ashgabat, Turkmenistan)

Enclosed in glass and white steel, the largest indoor Ferris wheel was built to resemble an eight-sided star, a national symbol.



541 FT.

SINGAPORE FLYER (Singapore)

The world's tallest observation wheel (from 2008 to 2014) rotates toward the city's financial district to symbolize the influx of wealth.

LEAVE IT



James Franco said he hit on a 17-year-old girl via Instagram: "I guess I'm just a model of how social media is tricky."

A New York City court stenographer jeopardized convictions by allegedly typing, "I hate my job" and random characters in the official record during trials.

HBO Go crashed during the Season 4 premiere of *Game of Thrones*, the second such incident in a month.



Kim Kardashian uploaded a gorgeous photo from her trip to Thailand—identical to one that appears on a free wallpaper site and is searchable on Google Images.

TIME FROM COMPLEX TO
THE FILM AND MUSIC
AVERAGE VISIT
time.com/
entertainment

Dollars for Dialing

The Supreme Court just made being an ultra-wealthy American a lot more annoying



I DON'T KNOW IF the Supreme Court's decision to allow people to donate to

as many candidates as they want will cause trouble for our democracy. But I do know it will cause a lot of trouble for rich people.

There are a lot of misconceptions about the extremely wealthy. Most have pools that are completely finite. Many are so secure in their first marriages that they include their spouse's name on their museum wing. Also: They don't call up candidates to offer them money. Candidates call them.

Now that the \$48,600 limit on donations to federal candidates per election cycle has been wiped away by *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*, everyone running for office will be bothering them. And now they have no excuse. The only reason Shaun McCutcheon was willing to incur the wrath of all the other rich people in the country is that he lives in Alabama and therefore will never meet any of them.

founders are not sick about this, there's a good chance the court will soon allow Katzenberg to retroactively donate to their campaigns and convince them to feel that way.

Damon Lindelof, the co-creator of *Lost*, had already come up with a strategy to deal with the court's decision: "I have had no choice but to change my party affiliation every time someone calls and asks for money. It's tiring but worth it," he explained. Though getting a call asking for money is actually a welcome relief for Lindelof, since it means someone wants to talk about something other than the last episode of *Lost*.

It turns out that, like Lindelof, most rich people don't max out: in fact, only about 600 do. This might be the Supreme Court decision that affects the fewest people since *U.S. v. People With Full-Time Jobs Who Know the Details of Malaysia Flight 370*. When I contacted billionaire Mark Cuban, he wasn't even aware of the de-

tails of *McCutcheon*. "But," he said, "I can tell you what I tell all politicians asking me for money: No." Which is the exact opposite of what he tells every journalist asking for a quote.

Those who did give the limit are already so entrenched in the donor system that a little more is not going to affect their lives. Phil Rosenthal, the creator of *Everybody Loves Raymond*, who came within an accounting error of maxing out to Democratic candidates in 2012, said, "My problems are minor compared to some members of the Supreme Court, who seem to be suffering from a mental deficiency." Ken Kies, who runs a tax-lobbying firm and has—along with his wife—maxed out giving to Republicans, isn't worried either. "It's already so irritating. I get 50 emails a day, so I can't imagine that's going to increase," he said. The really big donors, he explained, are already giving as much as they want through super PACs. The really really big donors just run for office themselves.

The biggest change, he said, is that people in D.C. will claim to give more. "There are a lot of people throwing cocktail parties, saying they have given the max, but they apparently don't understand there are basic websites you can look at to check," he said. It's the equivalent of celebrities in L.A. bragging about how much plastic surgery they haven't had.

Peter Buttenwieser, a philanthropist and Lehman Brothers heir who reached the limit for giving last year, also isn't worried about getting more calls from candidates. "I basically know all these people, and they know me," he said. "It's not like a strange nonprofit calling in the evening." Still, he hates the decision because raising money wastes so much of candidates' time. "I've spent an entire life working with public schools in the inner city. I'd much prefer to be influential there than someone who is a major player in the Democratic Party. It's not a great calling," he said.

When America doesn't provide great callings to the rich, we are all failing. Soon, there will be children who don't even care about making as much money as they can, since they know so much of it will go to negative campaign ads they'll have to watch before their 48-second YouTube videos about unusual cats. What the authors of the Constitution didn't realize is that when we have too much freedom, we express it in really lame ways. I hope Katzenberg can talk them out of that. ■

I asked Jeffrey Katzenberg, who gave more than \$3 million to help elect Obama in 2012, if he was worried about getting hundreds of calls from Democrats running for Congress this year. "I just changed my email and phone numbers and am now wearing a hoodie," he responded. "The Founding Fathers must be sick of watching our democracy disintegrating as elections are put up for sale to unlimited contributors." And if our nation's



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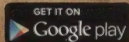
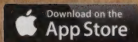


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10 Questions

Pelé's real name is Edison, after Thomas Edison. He was born the year electric light came to his town



Brazilian soccer legend **Pelé** talks about his favorite goal, the World Cup and why he'd be even better today

Your new book is called *Why Soccer Matters*. Why does it?
Well, look at me. I haven't played for 25 years. And this book will be for my third generation of fans. Soccer matters to people everywhere.

O.K., but you say that Brazil's 1950 World Cup final loss to Uruguay was like the Kennedy assassination in the U.S. Isn't that going too far?

I don't think so. I think it was very similar. The emotion was almost the same. When Brazil lost, it looked like something died, the country died—the same as what happened with Kennedy. I was 9 years old. It was the first time I saw my father crying.

Why do you think soccer has not stayed popular in the U.S. since you left the New York Cosmos?

Oh, I think it still is very popular. People should understand, the New York Cosmos had a lot of big names—players from all over the world came here to play. But now soccer in the U.S. is better organized for youth than in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay or any country. American youth today all play soccer. Besides that, it has one of the best women's teams. The pro league is not like in Italy or Brazil, but it still is a strong league.

What are Brazil's chances in the upcoming World Cup?
Brazil is no doubt the favorite. It's one of the best teams in the

world. But this World Cup will be different. Brazil's always had good forwards and wings. This year, for the first time, Brazil has better defense, in my opinion. Now our coach may have a little problem setting up an attack. Neymar is 22—he's never played World Cup.

Brazil has been criticized for building facilities for the World Cup while ignoring the needs of the people who live nearby. Do you agree?
There are reasons for the protests and the criticism. People are also complaining about corruption. I think this is correct. But we have two excellent moments for Brazil to grow income and tourism—the World Cup and the Olympics. The players and the athletes don't have anything to do with the corruption. They promote Brazil. Why do the people who protest want to damage the World Cup? Let's wait until it's over and then put the political people and criminals in jail.

You scored about 1,280 goals in your career. Do you have a favorite?

Actually, the official number is 1,283. Some goals were more important because they were in very difficult or important games. And some we scored in charity games. But if the goal is beautiful, it doesn't matter which game,



you know? I was 17 years old in my first World Cup when I scored a goal in the final against Sweden. But people say my 1,000th goal was more important. Some goals are more important and others are more beautiful.

Would you be as good if you were playing now as you were in your prime?

Better. The preparation's better, the technology helps, and the rules protect the players.

If you could choose a team from any era, who would you play for?

I'd take my team in Brazil—Santos—when I was playing. But if I have to choose one team to play with in this moment, Barcelona. They play the same style that Santos used to play.

You're known for endorsing a lot of products. Have you ever turned anything down?

Oh, yes, yes. Many, many, many, many offers, many proposals I don't do. I endorse things I believe in. To this day, I get a lot of proposals for cigars or alcoholic drinks. That is not something I believe is good for youth, for athletic people.

Why do you often refer to yourself as Pelé?

Everything good, it is Pelé who does it. The bad is [my given name] Edison.

—BELINDA LUSCOMBE

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Let's
Go
Places

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Ngemelis Island, Palau. Marine biologist Michael Berumen uses an iPad with a waterproof housing to capture more data, more accurately. And he uses these findings to help protect the delicate ecosystems of our oceans.

A diver is silhouetted against the bright blue light of the sun filtering down from the surface of the ocean. The diver is holding a tablet (an iPad) in a waterproof housing with both hands, positioned as if taking a photo or video. The water is clear, and the light creates a dramatic, ethereal atmosphere. The diver's fins and breathing apparatus are visible.

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